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Becoming Human

Li Zehou's Ethics

By

Jana S. Rošker



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Notes on References, Bibliography, and Translation

Because of the small number of Chinese family names, the reference style of Chinese names in this book does not entirely follow the common Western guidances. In addition to their surnames, the given names of Chinese authors are included in the references (for instance, Wang Yangming 2018, I:5 instead of Wang 2018 I:5). To distinguish between sources that have been published by Chinese authors in English and the ones that have been published in Chinese by the same authors, the first and last names of the authors of Chinese material will not be separated by a comma. In contrast, in references to their works written and published in English or other Indo-European languages their surnames will be followed by a comma.

For example: a reference to Li Zehou's article written in English is: Li, Zehou 1999, "Subjectivity and 'Subjectality': A Response," *Philosophy East and West* 49(2): 174–83, the source within text is cited as (Li, Zehou 1999). His work in Chinese: Li Zehou 李澤厚 1999, *Zhongguo sixiang shilun* 中國思想史論 [On Chinese Intellectual History], Hefei: Anhui wenyi chubanshe, is cited within text as (Li Zehou 1999). Such specific conventions do not apply to sources written by non-Chinese authors.

Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from classical and modern Chinese contained in this book are my own.

Jana S. Rošker

Prologue: Li Zehou, His Life and Work

Li Zehou was born in 1930 in the Chinese city of Hankou and is currently living in the United States. He graduated from the Department of Philosophy at Peking University and was then a researcher and professor at the Research Institute of Philosophy at the prestigious Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS, *Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan* 中國社會科學院) in Beijing. As an important, renowned, and influential contemporary Chinese philosopher, he is commonly acknowledged as one of the most significant and vital theorists in post-Mao China and “the leader of the Chinese Enlightenment” of the 1980s (Chong 1999a, 3).

Li Zehou's theory is based upon philosophically innovative and remarkably creative analyses and interpretations of aesthetics, epistemology, ethics and anthropology. It has been variously categorized as neo-traditional, romantic, historical materialist, pragmatist, Neo-Kantian, Post-Marxist, or Marxist-Confucian (Jensen 2005, 461). He advanced exceptionally creative readings of art, literature, and philosophy in the politically, culturally, and philosophically inspired period of the 1980s when it seemed that aesthetics offered the greatest prospect of recovery from the social chaos caused by the Cultural Revolution (*ibid.*). Among other issues, he played a prominent role in the founding of the most important Chinese philosophical academic journal *Zhexue yanjiu* 哲學研究 (*Philosophy Research*). In this journal he published one of his most significant and most influential early theoretical essays “Lun meigan, mei he yishu 論美感、美和藝術” (*On Aesthetic Feeling, Beauty, and Art*, 1956), with which he quickly entered the national currents of intellectual discourse in the aesthetic debates over socialist realism.¹ With this and some other influential writings, the twenty-something Li quickly became a well-known figure in the progressive academic circles. During this period, he began to actively participate in the so-called Great Debate on Aesthetics (*Meixue da taolun* 美學大討論) of the 1950s and 1960s,² in which he critically questioned the works of two hitherto most famous Chinese aestheticians, Zhu Guangqian

1 Lionel Jensen (2005, 462) reveals that “for this essay, published in a tense atmosphere of literary politics ... he was branded a ‘rightist’ and, along with so many other intellectuals identified with Hu Feng’s critique of establishment literature, consigned to a work camp in Hebei.”

2 This debate was followed by a second wave of discussions on the function and essence of aesthetics, which took place during the 1980s under the name Aesthetic Fever (*Meixue re* 美學熱). Li Zehou actively participated and assumed a leading intellectual role in both discourses.

朱光潛 and Cai Yi 蔡儀. Li soon became one of the most visible proponents of this influential discourse, taking part in all of the most important controversies that decisively formed its development. Hence, it is not a coincidence that he belongs among the pioneers of modern and contemporary Chinese aesthetics.

In 1979, Li achieved scholarly distinction with the publication of his book titled *Pipan zhexue de pipan: Kangde shuping* 批判哲學的批判: 康德述評 (*Critique of Critical Philosophy: A New Approach to Kant*).³ In this theoretical reevaluation of Kantian philosophy, Li placed its central framework upon a social and materialist foundation by simultaneously incorporating into it the original Marxist definition of human beings as *homo faber*, i.e., as living beings developed through practice and their ability to make and to use tools in a systemic, continuous way. Humans are thus, in Li's view, re-creating both their environment and their inwardness into something he called "humanized nature." In this book, he formulated the sprouts of his emergent theory on the development of the human mental faculties through "sedimentation" (*jidian* 積澱). In this context, he redefined Kant's a priori formations (i.e., the preempirical faculties of the human mind, which help us to perceive and to order elements of our sense impressions) mainly by borrowing and applying to this discourse the dialectical methodology of Hegel and early Marx. In most of his work, he applied a modified version of historical materialism, but selectively drawing additional inspiration from the works of Heidegger, Lukács, the Frankfurt School, Lacan, Piaget, Habermas and others. Li also deepened the problematics of the self in post-revolutionary modernism by putting forward a new concept of human beings as active agents. He expressed this reconceptualization of the human subject with his newly coined neologism *subjectality* (*zhutixing* 主體性). By contradicting the passivity of the human subjects, as well as by establishing the dialectical-materialist view of their consciousness as something that surpasses mere mechanical reflection of the material world, Li brought forward an ideational revolution. This revolution was generated in the name of beauty and was directed against all ideologies and doctrines serving the indoctrination and manipulation of human beings and limiting their humanness to a status of passive and obeying objects.

In subsequent years, Li's influence grew constantly and gradually he gained the reputation of being one of the most important Chinese theoreticians of the twentieth century. In the first four decades after the establishment of

3 In the preface to the English translation of this book that was published almost four decades later (2016), Li mentioned that he originally intended to title the book *A New Explanation of Kant* (*Kangde xinjie* 康德新解) but, due to various circumstances, he was not able to use this title.

the People's Republic of China, Li was most famous for his work in Chinese aesthetics. His first comprehensive book on this topic was published in 1981 under the title *The Path of Beauty* (*Meide licheng* 美的歷程). His other important works on related themes include *The Chinese Aesthetic Tradition* (*Huaxia meixue* 華夏美學, 1988) and *Four Essays on Aesthetics* (*Meixue si jiang* 美學四講, 1989). These three books were later reprinted and published together in his famous collection titled *Three Books on Aesthetics* (*Meixue sanshu* 美學三書).

Because of his huge influence on young intellectuals throughout that period and due to the fact that he was one of the signatories of a petition to the government during the 1989 student movement, he was criticized in the official press after the Tian'anmen incident and indicted of being an exponent of "bourgeois liberalism" (Chong 1999a, 3). In 1992, he left China and has lived abroad ever since, returning merely for infrequent visits and as a guest lecturer at various Chinese universities. He has also been a guest professor at many Western universities, but most of the time, he taught philosophy at the University of Colorado in Boulder. After his retirement, he continues to publish academic writings.

In spite of his great fame in the field of aesthetics and Chinese art history, Li also became an extremely productive writer in other areas of philosophy. He published a wide range of articles, essays, and over thirty books, dealing with his views on Chinese intellectual history, classical Chinese and comparative philosophy, epistemology, philosophical anthropology, ontology, theories of modernization, political thought and ethics. All these works partly include a comparative perspective grounded on Li's broad knowledge of traditional and modern Western philosophy. Due to his extreme productivity, it is rather difficult to decide which of his works deserve a special mention. Below, I will nevertheless try to point out some of his most influential books and essays.

Among the works that provide an overview of his own philosophical system and explain the crucial concepts of his theory are *Wode zhexue tigang* 我的哲學提綱 (*The Outline of My Philosophy*) and *Zhexue gangyao* 哲學綱要 (*Outline of Philosophy*). Many essays on related topics can also be found in his influential collections that include, among others, *Zou wo ziji de lu* 走我自己的路 (*Following My Own Way*) and *Za zhu ji* 雜著集 (*A Collection of Various Essays*).

His works on epistemology are also hugely influential, especially those based upon his critique and elaboration of Kant's philosophy. Besides the aforementioned *Pipan zhexuede pipan—Kangde shuping* 批判哲學的批判: 康德述評 (*Critique of Critical Philosophy: A New Approach to Kant*), an overall description and argumentation of his reinterpretation of Kant's subjectivity

and its integration into his newly coined concept of subjectality (*zhutixing* 主體性) can also be found in his essays titled “The Four Outlines.”⁴

Li also wrote several works on philosophical anthropology and historical ontology. These included, for instance, the well-known article titled *Renlei qiyuan tigang* 人類起源提綱 (*Outline of the Origin of Mankind*) and his *Lishi bentilun* 歷史本體論 (*Historical Ontology*) was later republished in a more completed and expanded form with the title *Renleixue lishi bentilun* 人類學歷史本體論 (*Anthropo-Historical Ontology*).

In terms of his studies in classical and traditional Chinese philosophy, immediately after the Cultural Revolution in 1979, he published the first book of his trilogy on traditional Chinese thought entitled *Zhongguo jindai sixiang shilun* 中國近代思想史論 (*On Premodern Chinese Intellectual History*). These were followed in the 1980s by *Zhongguo gudai sixiang shilun* 中國古代思想史論 (*On Ancient Chinese Intellectual History*) and *Zhongguo xiandai sixiang shilun* 中國現代思想史論 (*On Modern Chinese Intellectual History*), respectively. In 1980, he also published his influential essay *Kongzi zai pingjia* 孔子再評價 (*A Reevaluation of Confucius*), which was especially significant because it proved that Li was among the first contemporary Chinese philosophers who struggled for a rehabilitation of Confucianism, which was hitherto sharply criticized and marked as a “feudalistic ideology.” His reinterpretation of Chinese classics entitled *Lunyu jindu* 論語今讀 (*Reading the Analects Today*) and an important collection containing his specific theories on the development of Confucianism and its influence upon Chinese culture, namely, the *Jimao wu shuo* 己卯五說 (*Five Essays from 1999*) can also be seen as significant contributions to this field of research. In his *Shiyong lixing yu legan wenhua* 實用理性與樂感文化 (*Pragmatic Reason and the Culture of Pleasure*) Li elaborated on the intellectual and ideational foundations of traditional Chinese culture; of

4 The first one, entitled “An Outline of Kant’s Philosophy and the Construction of Subjectality” (*Kangde zhexue yu jianli zhutixing lungang* 康德哲學與建立主體性論綱), was first published in 1981 as a speech given at a conference organized in order to celebrate the 200th jubilee of Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason. The second one followed four years later under the title “A Supplementary Explanation of Subjectivity” (*Guanyu zhutixingde buchong shuoming* 關於主體性的補充說明). Subsequently, Li wrote two more supplements on these explanations, namely, “The Third Outline on Subjectivity” (*Guanyu zhutixingde di san tigang* 關於主體性的第三提綱), which was published in 1987, and “The Fourth Outline on Subjectivity” (*Guanyu zhutixingde di si tigang* 關於主體性的第四提綱), first published in 1989. All “Four Outlines” were later republished in the Taiwanese edition of his book, *The Outline of My Philosophy* (*Wode zhexue tigang* 我的哲學提綱, 1996). Li also summarily explained the most important feature of this concept in English in his article *Subjectivity and ‘Subjectality’: A Response*, which was published in the journal *Philosophy East and West* in 1999 (Rošker 2019, 12).

note as well is his treatise, *Dangdai sichao yu Zhongguo zhihui* 當代思潮與中國智慧 (*Contemporary Currents of Thought and Chinese Wisdom*). In recent years, Li upgraded his theories in these fields and published the results in 2015 in a compilation entitled *You wu dao li, shi li gui ren* 由巫到禮，釋禮歸仁 (*From Shamanism to Ritual regulations and Humaneness*).

Regarding his specific understanding of Chinese modernization, we have to point out his famous and most controversial reversal of Zhang Zhidong's 張之洞 slogan advocating "the preservation of the Chinese Substance and the application of Western Function" (*Zhongxue wei ti, Xixue wei yong* 中學為體，西學為用). This approach sought to preserve the Chinese tradition in the face of modernization, which, however, was understood as being limited to assimilating Western technology and administration. Li inverted this binary opposition by defining modernization as the transformation of the substance, in the sense of general social consciousness, production, and lifestyles. Various explanations of this reversal are included in numerous aforementioned books, but Li also elaborated on this problem in his article *Man shuo "Xiti Zhongyong"* 漫說“西體中用” (*A Simple Lecture on "Western Substance and Chinese Function"*) which was published in 1999, and in his book *Shuo Xiti Zhongyong* 說西體中用 (*On Western Substance and Chinese Application*) that followed in 2012.

In his middle years, Li increasingly began to lay stress on his studies in Chinese and comparative ethics, which serve as the main topic of the present book. Besides being published in numerous essays and interviews dealing with his ethical thought, Li's views on ethics and morality are summarized in the book *Lunlixue gangyao* 倫理學綱要 (*An Outline of Ethics*) published in 2010. The recently published (2015) book *Shenme shi daode* 什麼是道德 (*What Is Morality*) is based on his important differentiation between ethics and morality and on ethical and philosophical debates that he carried out in 2014 at the Huadong Normal University in Shanghai. In *Huiying Sangde'er ji qita* 回應桑德爾及其他 (*A Response to Michael Sandel and Other Matters*), which was first published in 2014, he discusses his own system of ethics and political philosophy and places it in relation to Western liberalism. One important work from the broad range of his writings in the political dimensions of ethics is *Makesizhuyi zai Zhongguo* 馬克思主義在中國 (*Marxism in China*), published in Hong Kong in 2006. Li's reinterpretations of Marxist theories can also be found in *Gaobie geming* 告別革命 (*Farewell to Revolution*), a book he coauthored with Liu Zaifu 劉再復. His hitherto last theoretical book on ethics was published in 2017 under the title *Lunlixue gangyao xupian* 倫理學綱要續篇 (*Outline of Ethics—Continuation*).

Although Li has a huge influence on Chinese scholars, he is still relatively unknown in the Western world. Until recent years, translations into English of his works were limited to those on aesthetics, which represented his main field of interest in the 1970s and 80s. His books mentioned above that dealt with the introduction and analysis of Chinese aesthetic thought were translated into Western languages under the following titles: *The Path of Beauty: A Study of Chinese Aesthetics* (1994),⁵ *Four Essays on Aesthetics: Toward a Global Perspective* (2006), and *The Chinese Aesthetic Tradition* (2010).

During the last two decades of the twentieth century, a few of his essays on such topics as the rehabilitation and revival of Confucian thought, interpretations and upgrading of Kantian philosophy, and studies of Chinese Marxism have also been translated into Western languages (see Chong 1999a, 15; Rošker 2019, 10). Most of these translations, however, were published in journals or monographs with a relatively narrow range of distribution and impact in the Euro-American region. Somewhat more influential and certainly very valuable is the special issue of the journal *Contemporary Chinese Thought*, which was published in 1999 and edited by Woei Lien Chong. It contains seven translations of Li's articles on various topics, ranging from his theories on the origins of human beings, his concepts of sedimentation and subjectivity, to his elaborations on Chinese modernity.⁶

During the last few years, especially since the launching of the international conference *Li Zehou and Confucian Philosophy* that was organized in 2015 by Roger Ames and Peter Herschok at the East West Center of the University of Hawai'i, substantial efforts were made to translate at least some of his most important works into English.

In 2018 and 2019 respectively, three of his most important books were published in the English language, namely Jeanne Haizhen Allen's translation of his *Pipan zhaxuede pipan* under the English title *A New Approach to Kant—A Confucian-Marxist Viewpoint*, Andrew Lambert's translation of Li's book *Zhongguo gudai sixiang shilun*, entitled *The History of Classical Chinese Thought*, and Robert A. Carleo's translation of his *You wu dao li, shi li gui ren*, entitled *The Origins of Chinese Thought: From Shamanism to Ritual Regulations and Humaneness*. The first English monograph on his philosophical system

5 Even before the English translation, this book was translated into German by Karl-Heinz Pohl and Gudrun Wacker (see Li Zehou 1992).

6 The volume contains translations of the following essays: "A Supplementary Explanation of Subjectivity"; "An Outline of the Origin of Humankind"; "Some Tentative Remarks on China's Wisdom" (Excerpts); "The Dual Variation of Enlightenment and Nationalism" (Excerpt); "The Image Level and Artistic Sedimentation" (Excerpts); and "The Western Is the Substance, and the Chinese Is for Application" (Excerpts).

entitled *Following His Own Path—Li Zehou and Contemporary Chinese Thought* (2019) was published by the SUNY Press in New York (Rošker 2019). After the aforementioned conference at the University of Hawai'i, its proceedings were published in a special monograph entitled *Li Zehou and Confucian Philosophy*. The book was edited by Roger T. Ames and Jia Jinhua. In January 2020, a special issue of the journal *Asian Studies* was published in Ljubljana. It is focused on Li Zehou's ethical and aesthetic thought and dedicated to him on the occasion of his 90th birthday. It is my hope that the publication of these texts will make different aspects of Li Zehou's thought available to a wider Western audience.

In 2016, the journal *Philosophy East and West* published the first English translation of Li's work in the field of ethics. This was Paul D'Ambrosio's and Robert A. Carleo's translation of Li's eighty-page dialogue entitled "A Response to Michael Sandel and Other Matters" from September 2013; as mentioned, the Chinese publication titled *Huiying Sangde'er ji Qita* 回應桑德爾及其他 was published in Beijing in 2014. Based on Li's specific philosophical system, this work treats various central issues he has developed over recent decades and places them in relation to Western liberalism and the ideas of harmony and justice. In this book Li deals with a relatively wide spectrum of different social and political, but primarily ethical, issues. The issues addressed include reinterpretations, completions, and critiques of Kant's deontological ethics; an analysis of the relation between reason and emotion; treatments of several complex questions linked to ethical substance; and the Chinese relational (*guanxizhuyi* 關係主義) paradigm and its comparison with the model of individualism, which underlies Western modernity. Other translations are underway in order to enable broader circles of Western readers to gain access to his philosophy of ethics and to explore his inventive ethical thought, which will be introduced and critically analyzed in the later chapters of this book.

The Importance of Ethics

Li Zehou believes that ethics belongs to the most important philosophical disciplines. He aims to revive, modernize, develop, and complement Chinese traditional ethics through what he calls “transformative creation” (*zhuanhua-xingde chuangzao* 轉化性的創造). He takes Chinese ethics, which represents the main pillar of Chinese philosophy, as a vital basis for his elaborations on certain aspects of Kant’s, Marx’s and other Western theoreticians’ thoughts on ethics and hopes to contribute in this way to a development of a new global ethics for the entire humankind (Li Zehou 2016b, 17).

In both ancient and premodern history, traditional Chinese philosophy has ascribed a lot more importance to ethics than the general Euro-American philosophical tradition. However, in modern Western philosophy, especially from Kant on, ethics and morality are also seen as discourses of utmost significance, for they are (according to Li Zehou) connected to the “substantial root of human beings” (*rende benti* 人的本體). Therefore, it is not a coincidence that Li himself attaches great importance to ethics and morality. For him, they are results of the long-lasting process of those aspects of the humanization of the nature (*zirande renhua* 自然的人化) that pertain to our inner humanness; as such, they are that “which makes human beings human.” Li emphasizes that “[b]oth logically and practically speaking, ethics and morals have priority in relation to cognition” (Li, Zehou 2016, 1107). According to him, they are aimed as something higher than the phenomenal world that can be explained by epistemology. In contrast to Kant, however, Li sees this human substance as a dynamic and changeable entity: he believes that no human moral capacities are inherent or a priori, but should rather be seen as products of history and education.

For Li, the “substantial root of ethics” (*lunli benti* 倫理本體) is to be found in the human free will, which he sees as a part of human psychological formations embedded in the realm of the cultural-psychological formation (*wenhua-xinli jiegou* 文化—心理結構) of the human mind. In his view, free will belongs to the most important mental formations. It originates from conscious decisions of human beings to sacrifice their own, individual selfish interests for the greater good of a community. Such decisions are made when human beings consciously realize that their individual desires are in a sharp contradiction with the rational social demands of their community. These decisions are

special because they are the results of conscious reflection; hence, they belong to conscious human behavioral patterns and attitudes. Precisely because such free decisions are often made in contradiction with individual interests, needs and desires, the free will cannot be seen as a simple result of causal laws or interests. Since it is not something subordinated to the laws of causality, which governs the phenomenal world, it is “free.” Here, freedom is not understood in the sense of being able to do whatever one wants to do. Rather, similar to the one defining Kant’s deontological ethics, it is a freedom of being unbound by (or liberated from) the primeval margins (limitations or laws) that determine the phenomenal world. This could also be seen as an expression of humans as supra-biological (*chao shengwu* 超生物) beings:

A human being is not merely a biological entity; to become a human being, necessarily means to possess an inner, conscious rational moral character.

人並不只是一個生物體而已；要成為一個人，必須有內在的自覺的理性品德。

LI ZEHOU 2016b, 20

Hence, humans possess the capacity to surpass their biological limitations not only because tools (or technology) complete—and thus perfect—their limbs and organs, but also because they possess free will. In this sense, freedom is the opposite of necessity. It enables human beings to consciously decide to carry out moral actions, which can surpass the causal laws of individual harm and benefit. Animals do not possess this kind of freedom.

The crucial point here is that human “free will” as such has a higher, sublime value. It cultivates people’s universal psychological formations, bestowing them with social and cultural contents applicable for themselves and for their fellow human beings (including their descendants). In this way, it causes the social existence of human beings to be profoundly different from that which defines animals. This is what is known as the “substance of ethics,” which surpasses the phenomenal world.

這裡關鍵在於，人的這種“自由意志”本身具有崇高價值，它為人類自己和對他人（包括對後人）培育了社會文化內涵的普遍性的心理形式，使人獲得不同於動物界的社會性存在。這就是所謂高於現象界的“倫理本體”。

ibid., 19

Li points out that in China the process of this cultivation, which manifests itself already in the earliest child education, is called “learning to be human” (*xue zuo ren* 學做人).

He admires Kant for his construction of the categorical imperative by which he described this characteristic of ethical behavior as determined by the governance of reason. In its function of an absolute order comparable to a divine decree, which has to be followed even without any additional argumentation, the sublime power of categorical imperative has not only liberated people from all fears but also from all instantaneous worldly wishes (*ibid.*, 20).

To a certain extent, Li Zehou agrees with Hegel's critique of this model: Hegel criticized Kant's ethics as being confined to pure formalism and lacking contents. According to Kant, these formal structures (of rational domination over desires) determine ethical action and even represent universal legislative principles for particular ethical norms. However, in specific and concrete historical contexts, this vision is difficult to uphold. Human beings exist in concrete social and familial groups—they always belong to certain social strata and they are always necessarily defined by specific relations to other people and to the society as a whole. In other words, human existence is always conditioned by economic, geographical, historical, environmental, cultural, and ideological factors. Because of this, the realization of moral actions and the implementation of ethical relations and norms have different qualities depending on the concrete circumstances defining the existence in which human beings live. Different cultures affirmed numerous different—often mutually conflicting—conceptions of what constitutes moral. In this context, as a result of particular social conditions, ethics and morality necessarily appear relative. This was the starting point for the evaluation of ethics of most modern philosophers, not only for Hegel and Marx, but even more so for various streams of utilitarianism. To Li Zehou, it is also clear that ethics evolves with history. He exposes that we have to view ethics within the context of historicism, because an independent “ethicism” (*lunlizhuyi* 倫理主義) does not exist. On the other hand, however, such a critique is one-dimensional because in Li's view, benefit and harm alone (no matter if they are individual or group-based) do not suffice for explaining moral actions. This problem seems to point to the existence of a universal value, which exceeds the concrete material conditions of human life. Li proceeds from the question of, Where does this universality (or absoluteness) come from. For him, this question belongs to the most important (and complex) issues of ethics. In Li's theory, the absolute ethical notions do not originate from an external God, nor from biological or neurological determinable aspects of human consciousness. Rather, these foundations of ethical behavior are embedded in individual psychological formations, but they are

not a priori as in Kant's deontology. According to Li, they are a part of the crucial characteristics that define humankind as such. To Li, humankind as an entirety is a dynamic entity, which is constantly evolving due to its material practice, through which its experiences, modes of interactions and knowledges (including moral knowledge) accumulate and shape mental formations. These universal principles are hence based upon the requirement for a sustainable existence and continuous reproduction of the humankind. In this context, it is also important to note that the universal grounds of these principles are based upon Kant's rational categorical imperative and not on any kind of moral feelings. The latter are secondary, and the former primary. The free will is rational and not based on emotions.

The quality that truly makes human beings human are our rational characteristics. In the process of human evolution, the most important formations, which pertain to the human ethical substance, are linked to the "condensation of reason" (*lixing ningju* 理性凝聚). However, this cohesion of rationality pertains merely to its structure or its form without any particular content. The contents are always relative, always fitting to particular requirements of corresponding societies; thus the form of human ethics is absolute but its contents are relative. This view, which is based upon a correlativity (or complementarity) of form and content and, analogously, of absoluteness and relateness, also enabled Li Zehou to oppose the (widely spread) theories of ethical relativism or even situationalism.

Li denotes this complementarity "a dialectical relation between the 'absolute' and the 'relative' ethics." In this model, the former shapes the latter:

From ancient times, human societies have always established various ceremonies, customs, laws, religions, and arts. The concrete functions of these systems shaped the concrete "social morality," that is, the "relative ethics." Its wide-reaching substantial function, however, shaped the "absolute ethics" and the "religious morality," which is the breeding ground of the "free will."

自古以來，人類社會各個時期都有一大堆禮儀，習俗，制度，法律，宗教和藝術，其現實功能在於塑建當時的“社會性道德”，即“相對論理”；其長遠的本體功能，卻在塑造作為“絕對論理”和“宗教性道德”寓所的“自由意志”。

LI ZEHOU 2016b, 24

In this model, the concrete contents of the social morality, which belongs to relative ethics, construct the psychological formations, which are absolute. In Li's view, this model simultaneously reflects the complementary nature

of emotions and reason. The Chinese philosophical tradition, especially the intellectual history of Confucianism, is full of examples of how to achieve this absoluteness: while the Confucian *Analects* lay stress on explaining rituality as a return to humaneness, Mencius speaks about the cultivation of one's vital potentials (*qi* 氣) in order to achieve the upholding of one's will (*zhi* 志). Zhu Xi 朱熹 recommends applying the method of the exploration of things in order to reach the ultimate knowledge, and Wang Yangming 王陽明 exposes the importance of inner (or inborn) knowledge (*liang zhi* 良知). What is common to all these discourses is their tendency to construct psychological formations of condensed rationality by means of intense and hard moral training (ibid., 27).

Hence, Li's ethical theory, which manifests itself in his theory of anthropo-historical ontology (that will be explained more in detail in later chapters of this book), is tightly linked to traditional Confucian teachings. Through this synthesis, Li aims to explain his view of the Marxist term "humanization of nature" (*ziran de renhua* 自然的人化). In contrast to Marx, who chiefly dealt with the humanization of external nature, Li enriched the notion by his inspiring elaboration on the humanization of our internal nature.

As a philosopher who is intensely concerned with the future developments of China and of humankind, Li Zehou creates a theory that is not limited to the study of Confucian or the formulation of his own ethics (Jia, Jinhua 2018, 178). He also aims to uncover the "possible contributions that the Confucian ethics of emotion and the renewed emotio-rational structure can make to the development of Chinese and world civilizations" (ibid.). For him, Western philosophy did not manage to elaborate on the true origins of human ethical substance, Li's reply to Nietzsche's famous exclamation "God is dead!" (see Li Zehou 2016b, 649) is precisely because of this reason; it is high time for Chinese philosophy (and ethics) to appear in the realm of world philosophy.

General Philosophical System and Crucial Concepts

Throughout his scholarly life, Li Zehou was a philosopher with an extremely broad scope of interests, which he followed on the basis of his wide range of knowledge in different segments of philosophical theory. These include ontology, epistemology, social and political philosophy, ethics, psychology, comparative thought, Chinese ideational history, theories of modernization etc. In the late 1970s, he developed a strong interest in epistemology, theory of perception and aesthetics. Later on, during the eighties, aesthetics and philosophy of Chinese art gradually shifted into the center of his theoretical endeavors. In the 1980s, he played a most prominent role in the aesthetic debates and “fevers,” which dominated the Chinese intellectual discourses of the time.¹ Li has constructed his aesthetics based on his anthropo-historical ontology, which gradually became the central theoretical and methodological approach of all his analyses and interpretations. In the light of the inherent structure of his philosophical development, it is completely logical that the questions of ethics as one of the most important specifically human capacities and a precondition for human social life gradually, but consistently, shifted into the very focus of his philosophical studies. This book aims to critically introduce and explain Li Zehou’s ethical thought, to highlight its inventive elements and to posit it into current developments of ethical theories on the global level. However, in order to apprehend the explanations and interpretations of these questions, readers need to know and understand the basic features of Li’s general theoretical system² and to become familiar with its crucial concepts and approaches. The main ideas, notions and methods contained and applied in this system are simultaneously forming an important part of the basic framework of his ethical theory. Therefore, before submerging deeper into the special themes of Li’s ethics, one has to become acquainted with the main attributes of his general philosophy.

1 For a more detailed description of the general characteristics of these discourses and Li’s role in them, see for instance Li Zehou 2008b; 2016, 284–290; Rošker 2019, 185ff; Samei 2010, ix–xix; Wang Jing 1996, 93–117; etc.

2 For a detailed account of Li’s philosophy in English language, see my book on Li Zehou (Rošker 2019), and the anthology *Li Zehou and Confucian Philosophy* (2018), edited by Roger T. Ames and Jia Jinhua.

1 Anthro-po-Historical Ontology and the Question of Becoming Human

Li's overall philosophy is grounded on the so-called anthro-po-historical ontology (*renleixue lishi bentilun* 人類學歷史本體論).³ It represents his central research method and the elementary paradigm of his general philosophical system, which also denoted the practical philosophy of subjectivity (*Zhutixing shijian zhexue* 主體性實踐哲學). A newer, shorter form of the phrase—and also the subject and title of one of his major works—is *Historical Ontology* (*Lishi bentilun* 歷史本體論).⁴ At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Li shortened the name but emphasized that this abbreviation had no impact on the original meaning of the phrase, which still remained the same (2008c, 318).

Anthro-po-historical ontology can be understood as a kind of post-Marxist methodological tool, because Li shaped it in order to upgrade and modify the traditional Marxist theory, which for him was too one-dimensional and insufficient to fully explain the complex course of human evolvment. He accepted and advocated Marxist historical materialism while at the same time opposing his mechanistically abstracted schema of dialectical social development. The phrase anthro-po-historical ontology expresses his specific theory of human existence, including ethics and morality. In this framework, Li saw human development through the lens of a different, modified method of historical materialism. In his system, the question about what makes human beings human is of primary importance, and the field of anthropology is serving as the key approach in comprehending this problem. In this context, Li intensely opposed not only analytical philosophical accounts, but also all explanations of human life from a strictly biological point of view. Following the elementary Marxist configuration of material basis and ideational or spiritual superstructure, Li places particular values and moral standards as well as culturally determined concepts, ideas, ethical norms, and aesthetic inclinations into a twofold structure: one structure consists of individual lives and the other consists of general material existence of the entire humankind.

In this framework—similar to Marx—Li has also emphasized the ideal of “humanization of nature” (*zirande renhua* 自然的人化). However, he complemented the concept by an oppositional one that was inspired by Daoist

3 Originally, the name was shorter. In his earlier works, Li denoted this methodological framework simply as anthropological ontology (*renleixue bentilun* 人類學本體論) (Li Zehou 2002).

4 Actually, there are three books that bear the name of this paradigm—one with the shorter title (*Historical Ontology*) and two with the longer title (*Anthro-po-Historical Ontology*); most of the content of the latter is a reworked, expanded, and completed versions of the material collected in his book *Outline of My Philosophy*.

treatises; Li called this a corresponding antipode of the humanization of nature “naturalization of humans” (*rende ziranhua* 人的自然化).⁵

According to Marx, the humanization of nature is a process in which human beings through their self-initiated action convert their physical nature into an integral part of humanness.⁶ However, besides complementing it with the “naturalization of humans,” Li has also slightly transformed this original Marxist notion. In contrast to Marx, who has accentuated the relation between human beings and the external nature, Li understood the concept of the humanization of nature as a process that was not only directed toward the external, but also toward their internal realms. For Li, both dimensions constitute parts of humanness in the sense of the traditional Chinese notion *ren xing* 人性.

In order to understand Li’s anthropo-historical ontology, and especially his ethical thought, we must first clarify the concrete meaning of this traditional notion. In traditional China, it referred to innate features or dispositions that “makes us distinctively human” (Ames 2018), i.e., different from other species. In Western sinology, this notion has traditionally been translated as “human nature.” As the writings of A.C. Graham⁷ grew in influence, traditional Western translation of *ren xing* as human nature has gradually fallen out of favor

5 Through the process of naturalization, human beings might turn back to nature and so emancipate themselves from the omnipresent “control of instrumental rationality, from alienation by material fetishism, and from enslavement by the system of power, knowledge, language, and so forth” (Wang, Keping 2007, 251). The process of naturalization enables human beings to achieve and enjoy freedom in an aesthetic and spiritual sense. In doing so, the original biological concepts pertaining to the human body are turned into aesthetic notions (Li, Zehou 2010, 114).

6 In the original version of his Economic and Philosophical manuscripts, Marx writes about “Menschlichkeit” (2005, 59), which is translated as “human nature” in the English version (2007, 46), although “human nature” is “menschliche Natur” in German.

7 A.C. Graham first published his innovative view on the term in 1967 in his essay, “The Background of the Mencian Theory of Human Nature,” which was originally published in *Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies*. Almost two decades after the first publication, the article was reprinted in his *Studies in Chinese Philosophy and Philosophical Literature* in Singapore. Later, Roger T. Ames developed this debate further in his essay, dedicated to his teacher titled “The Mencian Conception of Ren Xing: Does It Mean ‘Human Nature’?” and in “Reconstructing A.C. Graham’s Reading of Mencius on *xing* 性: A Coda to ‘The Background of the Mencian Theory of Human Nature’” (1967). Some Sinologists, such as Irene Bloom, did not accept this interpretation and provided several well-founded arguments against it. Nevertheless, the notion has still been translated in different ways. However, I follow Graham’s and Ames’ interpretation of the term *ren xing* because I agree that translating the phrase as “human nature” is not only controversial but also problematic. In contrast to most other authors, I decided to translate it into “humanness” in order to show that it is something that “makes us distinctively human,” as pointed out by Ames. In this sense, it is important to see that it is also the outcome of human culture as the primary source of human cultivation

(Makeham 2001, 21). For Graham, the term “human nature” was a rather problematic translation of *ren xing*, in part because it has frequently been discussed in essentialist terms as a “given,” i.e., as “some innate endowment present in us from birth” (Ames 1991, 154) rather than being understood, as preferred by Ames, to mean “an achievement concept” (ibid.). Ames argues that *xing* is not a static nature but dynamic and changeable. He also points out that it is a relational term, which is culturally and historically conditioned. Therefore it is by no means an unchangeable innate status, but rather a creative act; in traditional Western understanding the term “human nature” has predominantly static or fixed connotations. However, in Christian theology—which belongs to the main ideational pillars of classical Western thought—human nature is viewed as originating in God (or creator). Hence, translating *ren xing* as *human nature* does not seem appropriate. Thus, I propose replacing in the English translation of *ren xing* the phrase “human nature” with the term “humanness,” in the sense of something that makes us human, or simply in the sense of “being human.”⁸

In Li Zehou’s view, humanness was shaped through making and using tools. This practice, which in fact belonged to the process of humanization of (inner and outer) nature, represented the origin of humankind. Li believes that it constitutes the specific supra-biological (*chao shengwu* 超生物) nature of human beings. This supra-biological characteristic manifested itself as a universal necessity,⁹ because the tools that were produced and applied in the process of this practice became an indispensable part of the human body, a kind of extension of human limbs and other organs. In this way, they became a vital constituent of human production and reproduction, without which human species could no longer do without. But the supra-biological feature as a product of such humanization of nature also pertains to human inwardness, for it shapes human subjectivity—a notion that will be introduced and further treated in the following sections of this book.

Li criticizes the fact that the leading theoretic fields dealing with humanness and human mind still belonged to transcendentalism and idealism. He aimed to absorb and to digest both Kant, through historical ontology, and Marx, by applying certain specific features of the Chinese tradition, which in his view, was based upon a strong drive for survival and the resilient consciousness

and development. On this account, *ren xing* as humanness can be associated with Li’s theories of sedimentation and with his notion of cultural-psychological formation.

8 For a rather comprehensive explanation and discussion of the *ren xing* problem, see Graham 1986, Ames 1991, Bloom 1994, and Ames 2018.

9 Li sees the root of such “universal necessity” in objective sociality.

of history.¹⁰ Li also modified the rigidly formal and mechanic nature of the Marxian system by incorporating into his own system of historical materialism the Kantian notion of the active and autonomous human subject that was placed into the center of the abovementioned concept of subjectality.

Li called such an anthropo-philosophical approach “post-philosophical” (*hou zhexue* 後哲學) ontology (Li Zehou 2016b, 377), especially considering the fact that in its own traditional philosophy, China never created a metaphysical ontology. Another reason for such a description lay in the fact that the starting point of this approach was linked to the alleged fourth basic question of Kant’s philosophy, a question that apparently pertained to the essence of humanness.¹¹

For Li Zehou, this was the foundation for the examination of three different problems, which mark the most important accounts of his system. He emphasized that the crucial aim of the anthropo-historical method is to explain the following questions: (a) How is it that human beings are alive? (*Ren ruhe huo* 人如何活?); (b) Why (or for what reason) do human beings live? (*Ren wei shenme huo* 人為什麼活?); (c) How do human beings live? (*Ren huode zenmeyang* 人活得怎麼樣?).

To Li, these three questions are rooted in the simple fact that human beings are alive. However, each question also represents a particular and unique discourse. We could say that the first question pertains to epistemology, the second to ethics, and the third to aesthetics. While the first question explores the subjectality of humankind, the second tackles issues belonging to the shaping of the human subject. The third question is linked to axiology and deals with the aesthetic realm of human life and its ultimate meaning. In his discussion of the first question, Li offered a solution to the riddle that makes us wonder why we are alive or what we are living for. His essential point here is the fact that the meaning of human life is not derived from death (or from that which happens after it), but from the life itself. The elaboration on the third question leads us to the aesthetic realm of our life and to the understanding of our most intimate, individual inner world. In this study, we are mainly

10 In order to emphasize the importance of concrete individual realities within the overall schema of historical materialism, he denoted these approaches as the “philosophy of eating” (*chi fan zhexue* 吃飯哲學; Li Zehou 2016b, 648–649).

11 As is well known, Immanuel Kant tried to summarize his theory in three basic questions, namely “What can I know?” (epistemology), “What should I do?” (ethics), and “What can I hope for?” (theology). Li points out that, toward the end of his life, Kant added to these a fourth question, namely “What is a human being?” This question obviously belongs to anthropology. Li emphasizes that his own anthropo-historical ontology begins with Kant’s fourth question by proposing as its central tenet the fact that humans are alive (Rošker 2019, 224).

exploring Li Zehou's ethical thought; we shall elaborate in detail his explanations as to the reason why human beings live.

In his reply, Li proceeds from the following consideration: even though our life is the ultimate reason for our existence, we know that we will eventually die. This conviction that we are alive and that we will be dead automatically leads to the question of whether or not life is worth living at all. Li highlights that people can find several possible answers to this question. People find the meaning of their lives in different significant tenets: some live for money or fame, others for their descendants, and many live for God or because they believe in an eternal existence. Such codes of belief are what every individual follows. Thus, the absoluteness of these notions is often coupled with principles such as "truth," "God's will," "the way of heaven (*tian dao* 天道)," "inner (or inborn) knowledge (*liang zhi* 良知)" or other notions of religious morality that form a part of the "condensation or solidification of reason (*lixing ningju* 理性凝聚)."¹² These rationalized mental forms often take on the form of absoluteness, which obliges every human being to follow them (Li Zehou 2016b, 30). In the framework of Li Zehou's anthropo-philosophical ethics, different notions pertaining to such forms are linked to the meaning of life and to individual values. All these significant systems are subsumed under Li's specific model of categorical imperative. The basis of such imperative is individual responsibility, for Li emphasizes that irrespective of our particular individual values, we are ultimately always responsible for our own lives:

Ultimately, everybody has to find out, to choose, and to decide upon the purpose of their life by themselves ... This is "free will": every human being decides consciously and freely upon his or her actions and attitudes. In this regard, no one is limited or restricted by the causal laws of the phenomenal world.

究竟為什麼活，仍然需要自己去發現、去選擇、去決定……這也就是「自由意志」：每個人自覺地自由地做出自己的行為決定，而不為現象世界的因果規律所約束、限制。

LI ZEHOU 2016b, 389

12 Condensed or solidified reason is an important notion of Li's theory, and especially of his ethical thought; therefore, we will further discuss it in later chapters. For now, we shall only highlight that it belongs to the crucial forms of human mental structures, which are transmitted from one generation to another. Although the concrete contents, included in these forms, are different according to specific societies, periods of time, nations, or classes, the substance of human ethics is being developed and accumulated precisely through these formal principles (Li Zehou 2015c, 20).

Li Zehou's concept of free will is similar to Kant's notion, which forms a vital part of his categorical imperative and his notion of practical reason. In Kant's framework, human behavior is only moral if it is founded upon maxims that could serve as a basis of universal law. However, there is a crucial difference between Li's and Kant's view of human mind, and therefore also between their particular views on the essence of the categorical imperative. For Kant, it is tightly linked to practical reason, which belongs to the a priori forms of human mind. Li, on the other hand, sees human morality as something that is rooted in dynamic pragmatic reasoning. Pragmatic reason, which is typical for Chinese tradition, is quite different from Kant's notion of practical reason. It functions in the human mind within the emotio-rational structure and is grounded upon the emotion-based substance.¹³ Li also highlights that such forms cannot be seen as steadily inborn in human mind, since they are the results of a dynamic, socially determined process in which human beings accumulate experiences over long periods of time and across many generations. Li calls this process "sedimentation," and we shall elaborate upon it more in detail in the corresponding section.

Li's categorical imperative is still transcendental, and in a certain, broader sense, it is not essentially (or directly) bound to experiences. In Li's view, reason still requires empirical feelings—such as love, respect or belief—for its functioning and realization. We find this throughout classic texts that underlie the works of major world religions, for instance, in the *New* and the *Old Testament* of Judaism and Christianity, or the *Koran* of Islam, and in ancient China's *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語) or the *Classic of Family Reverence* (*Xiaojing* 孝經). Thus, the basic question of ethics, namely the question of why one is alive, has a special foundation that transcends the individual and the humankind and offers us some kind of response (Li Zehou 2016b, 32). Religious moralities contained in such sacred texts are taken as standards for individual self-conscious decisions and actions as well as criteria that help people decide and behave in accordance with their values.

Hence, Li's answer to the second question that he raised in the framework of his anthropo-historical ontology, i.e., the question "why (or for what) are human beings alive" is closely connected to the interactions and relations between religion and society, absolute and relative ethics, and between individuals and humankind. Such an approach is deeply rooted in a strong awareness of one's inseparable connection to or identity with all of humanity as well as in the

13 The concepts of pragmatic reason (*shiyong lǐxìng* 實用理性), emotio-rational structure (*qínglǐ jiégòu* 情理結構), and emotion-based substance (*qíng běntǐ* 情本體) will also be further explained in this book.

awareness of one's own transitoriness that can be surpassed only through our specifically and uniquely human potential to love, to feel this identity, and to perceive and to experience beauty.¹⁴

Here, we should also mention another specific feature, which marks the innovativeness of Li's methodology. Anthro-po-historical ontology is different from most traditional philosophical approaches, which commonly proceed from feeling toward reason. It rather applies the opposite approach. It proceeds from reason, which manifests itself in humankind and its history, and in the laws of necessity. Ultimately, it explores the final stage of human evolution, namely *qing* (情), i.e., emotion, expressed through and reflected in individuals, contingencies, and human psychology (Li Zehou 2016b, 401).

For Li the material conditions of human existence are formative factors of human psychology and existence, humans are—as we have seen in his elaborations—unique in their ability to act in accordance with rational principles and in shaping these conditions by themselves. In this framework, in which the free will and the active role of individual human subject play a central role, mind and the material conditions of human existence are mutually interacting in and through social practice. Anthro-po-historical ontology's emphasis on the concrete actuality of human existence as the origin and basis of moral principles therefore also serves to affirm the significance of historically specific circumstances in moral judgment, since a concrete circumstance, in fact, still takes precedence to any supposedly “a priori” principles.

In this context, it is also important to know that Li's anthro-po-historical ontology is based upon the Marxist differentiation between the material basis (which is primary) and ideational superstructure (which is secondary). In his anthro-po-historical ontology, Li has therefore assumed Marx's emphasis on the crucial role of social practice. However, he opposed the Marxist view of class struggle and violent revolutions as the crucial driving force of social development. He also eliminated the Marxist notion of abstract or theoretical praxis from the primary role of social practice, which was, for him, a purely material activity (Rošker 2019, 228). As we will see later, anthro-po-historical ontology is—in many different ways—also a development and an upgrading of the Chinese intellectual tradition. In this sense, Li emphasized that “after God dies, Chinese philosophy will appear on the stage” (Li Zehou 2016b, 649).

14 Hence, it is by no means coincidental that Li Zehou's theory of anthro-po-historical ontology has led to a critical reconsideration of the conformist version of the Marxist epistemology and theory of perception by several Chinese theoreticians.

2 Sedimentation

Li Zehou's concept of sedimentation is crucial to understanding the basic structure of his anthropo-historical ontology. This pivotal notion regards an elementary philosophical idea, linked to several other central concepts, which constitute the fundamental theoretical platform of Li's system. He describes this notion as "the accumulations and deposits of the social, rational, and historical in the individual through the process of humanizing nature" (Li and Cauvel 2006, 94).¹⁵

As mentioned earlier, the term denotes the process of accumulating human experiences in the course of evolution, i.e., the progression of the shaping of human mind. In her article entitled "Li Zehou, Kant and Darwin: The Theory of Sedimentation" (2016, 141), Marthe Chandler shows that "the evidence from anthropology, studies of child development, primatology, linguistics and the behavior of our closest living primate relatives is highly suggestive and appears consistent with Li's theory of sedimentation."

The mental and spiritual formations established and stored in this process are significantly different from Kant's a-priori forms. The main difference between Kant's and Li's understanding of such formations lies in their respective disposition. In contrast to Kant, Li saw them as dynamic and modifiable, although their modifications can sometimes be much too slow to be perceived by human beings: thus, they seem as something, which is more or less fixed (and thus, it is easy to miscomprehend them as being a-priori).

Li mainly distinguishes between three basic levels of sedimentation (Figure 1). The fundamental layer, which is by far the largest one, is the "sedimentation of species" (*wuzhong jidian* 物種積澱). It includes universal forms that are common to all people. The second layer is the layer of "cultural sedimentation" (*wenhua jidian* 文化積澱). This narrower level consists of forms that are formed by specific thought and behavioral patterns, linguistic structures, and other factors shared by people belonging to particular cultures. The third layer is the smallest one. It is called "individual sedimentation" (*geti jidian* 個體積澱), and consist of our intimate worldviews, value systems, habits, emotions, as well as individual modes of thinking and feeling (Cauvel 1999, 156).

15 As already mentioned, Li Zehou has completed the early Marxist concept of humanization of nature (*zirande renhua* 自然的人化) with his own idea of the naturalization of human beings. In Li's view, humans are formed through the process of material practice and mental sedimentations, which manifest themselves in specific "cultural psychological formations" (*wenhua xinli jiegou* 文化心理結構), reconceptualizing both their environment and their inwardness into something called "humanized nature" (*renhuade ziran* 人化的自然).

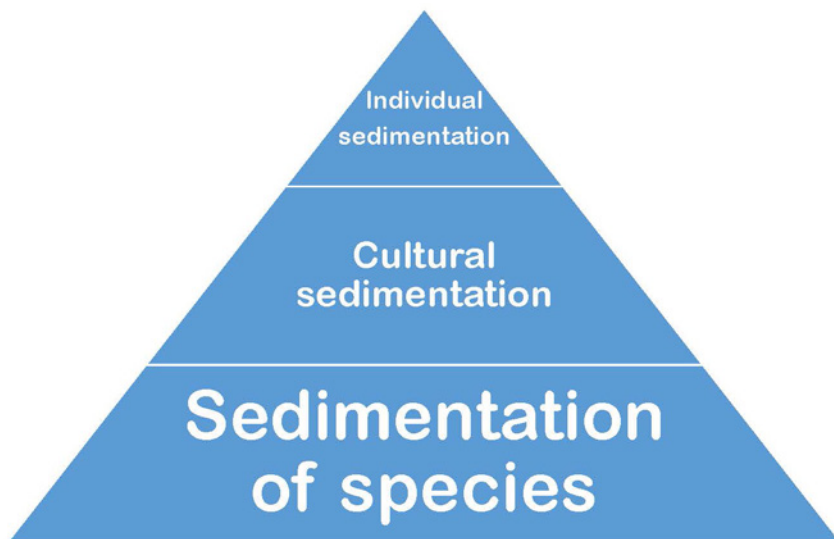


FIGURE 1 Three levels of sedimentation
ROŠKER 2019, 33

All three layers form a dynamic entity: the changes in the topmost (individual) layer are the fastest and appear in the course of specific life experiences. The changes are the slowest in the most fundamental, deepest universal, bottom-most layer of sedimented forms of human species. "From the viewpoint of an individual life, or even from the viewpoint of many generations, this level is fixed and static, since our limited sense organs cannot perceive or comprehend changes that took place gradually over a long historical evolvement that lasts several millions of years. Hence, these forms falsely appear to us as static and unchangeable" (Rošker 2019, 33).

The concept of sedimentation is also connected with Li's view on the human subject (and with his notion of subjectality, which will be treated later). In his system, sedimentation is the very process that shaped the contemporary human subject. For him, the life of modern people in contemporary societies is lacking a meaningful context (Jensen 2005, 463). In order to provide them with new possibilities of self-awareness and self-perception, Li wished to expose and to highlight the experience of the individual as a historicized, activist subject. "The 'subject' of 'subjectality' is not merely able to 'think' or to 'know,' but can also act, work, invent, produce, congregate, cooperate, desire, feel, remember, and so on." (Van den Stock 2020, 62). By shaping the neologism of sedimentation, he aimed to emphasize the historical identity of human beings as living parts of the evolvement of the entire humankind.

In their book titled *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise on the Sociology of Knowledge*, Peter Bergman and Thomas Luckmann (1991, 85) also apply and describe the term sedimentation in a similar way, pointing out that only a small part of the totality of human experiences is retained in consciousness. Such experiences become sedimented, i.e. congealed in recollection as recognizable and memorable entities.

However, it is unlikely that Li Zehou had adopted their terminology, because he had earlier described the process of sedimentation in his first theoretical essay, *Lun meigan, mei he yishu* 論美感、美和藝術 (*On Aesthetic Feeling, Beauty and Art*), which was published in 1956, whereas Bergman and Luckmann's book came out for the first time ten years later in 1966.¹⁶ In the essay Li emphasized the historical development of people's social and cultural life by comparing it with the gradual layering of silt that accumulates along riverbanks and nourishes life around it:

Therefore, social life is like a long river. Slowly and endlessly, it flows towards new depths and vast, faraway places. It is always moving and ever changing. Yet, in tracing it to its very source, we see that its nature is to irrigate life. And in its endless changing there are also motionless and accumulations of firm forms and standards.

所以，社會生活是一條長河，它滔滔不絕地流向更深更大的遠方，它是變動的；但是，追本溯源，生活又有著它的續承性，變中逐漸積聚著不變的規範、淮規。

LI ZEHOU 1956, 71

As we could clearly see from the quote above, as early as in his twenties Li was borrowing from geological terminology to describe this idea of historical accumulation of human experiences. But the term "sedimentation" as such was mentioned for the first time in his book *Pipan zhaxuede pipan* (康德述評) (*Critique of Critical Philosophy: A New Approach to Kant*), which was first published in 1979 but written during the Cultural Revolution.

16 In the following years, the term "sedimentation" gradually became a common expression with which various theoreticians from the field of sociology, anthropology, and other related fields have described the process in which information and experiences were encoded and stored in the human mind (see for instance Giddens 1981 and 1984, Butler 1988 etc.).

Regarding ethics, it is important to understand that according to Li, sedimentation enables human experiences to fuse into a complex and coherent entity, which unifies form and content, the natural and socio-cultural, and the senses and reason. In this context, we have to point out Li's firm belief that the collective consciousness exists logically and historically prior to the individual self. For him, humanity is thus the amalgamation of reason as a social phenomenon into sense experience, which is natural in essence. In this way, reason is condensed, sedimented, internalized, and accumulated into sensual experiences, incorporating sociality and naturality into one concordant unity (Li Zehou 1994, 460). Li also elaborated on the ethical dimensions of sedimentation. He emphasized that in this regard, the process had wide implications: inter alia, the collective psychological formations created by sedimentation provided the groundwork for human empathy, which, in Chinese culture, manifests itself in the central Confucian virtue of (co)humaneness (*ren* 仁).

As Marthe Chandler (2016, 140) shows, Li's theory of sedimentation could therefore effectively explain how *Homo sapiens* developed empathy. She founds her study on the theories by Michael Tomasello and Steven Mithen. According to them, the origin of language lies in the human cognitive ability, which manifests itself in the individual capacity of perceiving other humans as being the same as oneself (Tomasello 1999, 15 and Mithen 2006, 117). Yet, one could also presuppose that human brain has set up this kind of knowledge in the opposite way, namely, that a human being first recognized herself as an individual separated from other human beings (or the community as the elementary entity of self-identification), because s/he perceived him or herself as being "just like the others." Many recent anthropological theories are still based upon the primary position of individual self-awareness (Rošker 2019, 61).

Li Zehou did not overtly state that the opposite was true. He did not explicitly claim that the social awareness is predominant but merely pointed to the complementary and correlative connection between the individual and their social environment (Li Zehou 2007, 186–187). Many contemporary neurologic research studies also emphasize this correlativity. There is evidently a "chicken-or-egg problem" regarding the question of which developed first. However, "the main point is that the two co-evolved, mutually enriching each other to create the mature representation of self that characterizes modern humans" (Ramachandran 2009, 2). Therefore, Li's theory of sedimentation certainly "provides a perspective from which to remedy some of the individualistic assumptions of much contemporary social science" (Chandler 1916, 140) for it is consistent with contemporary scientific evidence.

Hence, sedimentation as a form of gradual development throughout human history certainly provides basic grounds for the shaping of human ethics and morality in the human mind.¹⁷ In this respect, it is important to recall that Li's theory of sedimentation relies on the accumulation and condensation of experience. It aims to illuminate the historical nature of what was regularly misperceived to be "innate" or "transcendental" for the individual. Li accentuated that what was experiential for humankind later became "a priori" for the individuals (Li, Zehou 2016, 1094). This is the most important dimension of his central proposition according to which "the empirical is being transformed into the transcendental" (*jingyan bian xianyan* 經驗變先驗). This also (or especially) holds true for ethics and morality; Li firmly believes that the absolute nature of the mental formations such as Kant's universal laws is typical of the rational structures of all of humankind. Li sees morality as that which makes human inwardness human and as that which enables us to continuously exist in groups and communities. Hence, the sedimentation of absolute moral laws is of utmost importance. The absolute aspects of sedimented human morality can then manifest themselves in all particular cultural environments. This is possible because morality is being sedimented as the vital part of what Li called the individual "psychological substance" (*xinli bentu* 心理本體). Li emphasized that this was "precisely the absolute aspect of moral human psychology sedimented within relative ethical culture."¹⁸ Li points out that even though conceptions of good and evil alter over time and in different societies, they also advance within constant accumulation following social advance and progress. This progress is visible, for instance, in the taking care of elders replacing the norm of killing them and in funerary objects replacing the burial of living humans to accompany the dead. Foot binding has also ended, and romantic love has become more accepted. Additionally, due to the ongoing homogenization of market economies, numerous ideas of good and evil are also slowly becoming similar. Our ethical views have an increasing amount in common. The ideas of good and evil produced through the sedimentation of human history move from human culture to human mind, becoming a part of shared humanness and permeating into human capacities and emotions (*ibid.*, 1120).

However, for Li, the absoluteness of moral mental formation is not grounded in any kind of supernatural or divine entity. In this respect, he criticized the

17 In this context, Li's translator Paul D'Ambrosio points to the fact that in Li's theory, the individual's own moral understanding and psychology is an accumulation of experiences in education (D'Ambrosio's note in Li, Zehou 2016, 1145).

18 However, in this respect, it has to be emphasized that even though Li accepts and even appreciates plurality and relativity in certain aspects of ethics and morality, he strongly opposes ethical relativism.

majority of Western theories because they are founded upon a common belief that only divine transcendence of humankind is absolute. He points out that even Kant's "pure reason" transcends humankind.¹⁹ In Li's view, this misconception is rooted in the fact that all principles, conventions, norms, and laws of human societies are changing and thus relative. In his view, these theories overlook the importance of the certainty and absoluteness sedimented by humankind through millennia of experience, history, and education (Li Zehou 2016, 1123). For him, there is absoluteness in the conception of "supreme goodness" in the sense of the preservation of human existence. This conception has fundamental or ontological value (*benti jiazhi* 本體價值) and does not necessitate any linkage to divine intentions. In this way, Li aimed to fill the empty space left by "the death of God" with "the continuous extension of human existence" (ibid.).

In Li Zehou's system, central moral principles like free will are shaped through the condensation or solidification of reason and, in contrast to the common views of modern philosophers, can be explained and verified through neurocognitive science. Li was convinced that the issue here was one of mind-body dualism. For instance, according to Kant, reason (or the free will) was independent and divorced from the phenomenological world. In such a view, it was logical that science, which explains the sensory world, could not explain reason or free will. But in Li's understanding, free will is a mental formation and a psychological state. As such, it is certainly related to the neurons through which this psychological state occurs. Hence, Li believes that in the future, neurology will be able to offer certain explanations of this occurrence, and he is convinced that through laboratory studies and experiments, it will be able to reveal the neurological activity that makes humans different from animals. He expects that science will confirm the existence of complex mental structures shaped through historical sedimentation and individual education.

I hope that the development of brain science in the next century will unveil this ability of humanness and hence further confirm the accurateness of my philosophical perspective of the "theory of sedimentation." On this basis, people will have more and more opportunities to

19 Although Li's critique is directed against a "majority" of Western theories and against a "common" view, which means that it only operates with the most influential and most dominant theories, it still seems to be a bit essentialistic. It completely ignores the extent to which the modern Western self-understanding—beginning with the very Kant!—has been ever more re-shaped and re-moulded through a continuous critique and problematization of the idea of God and transcendence and through a progressive diminishing of their importance.

effectively develop their cognitive capacities and their creativity. They will have more opportunities to grasp their destinies.

我期望未來世紀腦科學的發展，將科學地揭開這一人性能力問題，進一步證實我這個“積澱論”的哲學視角的確當性，來更好地更有效地幫助人們去發展自己的才智能力，去創造、把握自己的命運。

LI ZEHOU 2006a, 17

In Li's view, history is accumulative. The progressive nature of history means that for humankind as a whole the development of material life is followed by progression of ethics and morality. The sedimentation of certain collective conceptions of good and evil and the shaping of analogous emotions arises through the history and education of humankind (Li Zehou 2016, 1103). Through the long-lasting process of sedimentation, people can therefore gradually come to possess common ethical norms and moral principles.

3 Subjectality

Another central concept of Li Zehou's philosophy, which is of immense importance for the understanding of his ethical thought, is the concept of subjectality. Like sedimentation, it belongs to the key notions in his theoretical framework, around which his entire theoretical system is constructed. In addition, it is one of the most important ideas forming the contemporary Chinese intellectual treatises (Lin 1992, 977).

Li's notion of subjectality implies a radical reconceptualization of the subject. Just like his concept of sedimentation, it also became very influential in the Chinese academic world with the publication of his book *Pipan zhexuede pipan: Kangde shuping* 批判哲學的批判, 康德書評 (*Critique of Critical Philosophy*).

In shaping this concept, Li upgraded the notion of the self in postrevolutionary avant-gardism. Subjectality arose by sedimentation, and it surpasses individual consciousness, since it includes all facets of the humankind—the individual, communal, historical, natural, social, biological, sensual and rational. Even though the concept continues to be translated as *subjectivity* in most English editions of Li Zehou's work and in the English secondary material, Li himself has frequently emphasized that this translation was misleading (see e.g. Li, Zehou 1999e, 174 and Li Zehou 1985a, 14). He exposes the basic discrepancy between the Chinese notions of *zhuguanxing* 主觀性 and *zhutixing* 主體性: while the former is an epistemological term, the latter one is ontological. Their diverse semantic connotations imply substantial dissimilarities in

meaning. Translating both expressions as subjectivity can result in misunderstandings and reduce the precision of thought. Hence, Li suggests translating the notion *zhutixing* with a term of his own coining, “subjectality.”²⁰

Li has positioned his concept of subjectality into the framework of his “practical philosophy of subjectality” (*zhutixing shijian zhexue* 主體性實踐哲學), a designation that accentuates the dynamic (but not dialectical) nature of his specific historical materialism and his entire philosophy of anthropo-historical ontology. In this philosophical framework, he sought the answer to the question about what were the foundational constituents of humankind and what establishes the notion of the human subject (*zhuti* 主體) as an active, autonomous agent. “In Li’s system, the answer to this question revolves around the central concepts of practice (*shijian* 實踐)” (Rošker 2019, 68).

The notion of subjectality as an objective characteristic of human existence cannot be reduced to the individual level. In the first place, it pertains to different types of human communities (classes, groups, organizations, nations, states societies, etc.). Hence, Li identifies two categories of subjectality. However, these two aspects cannot be completely and strictly separate from one another: the first one refers to humankind as a whole and the second to each individual’s identity. The former precedes and conditions the latter. The first category empowers humankind to generate for itself a configuration of subjectality, which comes into existence through the material practice of making and using tools. This feature is supra-biological and is rooted in a universal necessity (Li, Zehou 1986, 136) because without the tools, which represent a kind of extension of limbs, human beings would not be able to survive. The second category of subjectality constitutes the individual inwardness of a human subject who is defined by her ability to supersede the laws of external nature, and simultaneously to act upon it and to modify it through autonomous decisions.

Subjectality is thus a dynamic and historically evolved form of humanness, which is made up of two binary dimensions (Figure 2). While the first one is an ontological structure, the second dimension pertains to the relation between individual and society. The binary ontological structure consists of the techno-social or instrumental substance (*gongju bentu* 工具本體), which occurs within the techno-social formation (*gongyi-shehui jiegou* 工藝—社會結構) of the human mind, and of the psychological substance (*xinli bentu* 心理本體), which arises within a cultural-psychological formation (*wenhua-xinli*

20 Actually, I am not completely sure whether it was truly necessary to coin a new, previously inexistent term to express the Chinese notion of *zhutixing*. In this regard, Li could have also considered the existing English term “subjectness,” which also pertains to the specific human quality of being a subject.

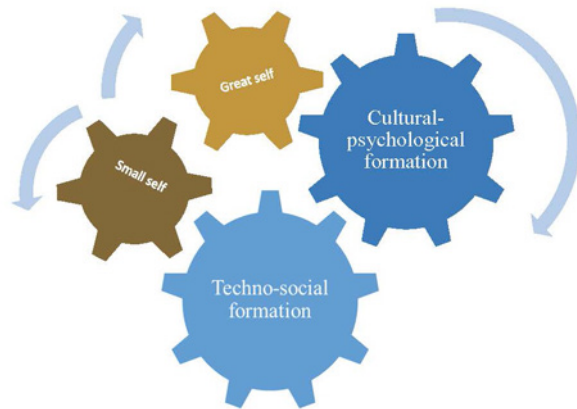


FIGURE 2 The two double dimensions of subjectivity
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jiégou 文化—心理結構). The second dimension contains human collectivities, such as societies, organizations, nations, groups, or classes, (*da wo* 大我) as well as individuals (*xiao wo* 小我).²¹ These four elements are interrelated and they interact, even though the previous two precondition the latter two and are therefore of primary nature. However, each of them is composed in a complex and multifaceted way. In his philosophy, Li Zehou has explored the development of humanity as well as of individuals with the help of these two double structures (Li, Zehou 1999, 30).

In Li's anthropo-historical system, the active dimension of subjectivity is rooted in free will.²² It is also grounded upon particular structural laws and objective principles. Subjectivity is not a mere reflection of sensual experiences since it evolves from the basic activity of producing tools and using

21 Li Zehou has first applied the notions of the individual in the sense of a "small self" (*xiao wo* 小我), and the humans as collective or social beings (*da wo* 大我) in his book *Critique of Critical Philosophy: A New Approach to Kant*. Here, Li Zehou was quoting Kang Youwei's 康有為 (Li Zehou 2001, 52). However, at the threshold of the 20th century, the two categories were also often mentioned by Liang Qichao 梁啟超 and Sun Yat-sen (Sun Zhongshan 孫中山).

22 Because of this emphasis on the social nature of subjectivity, some scholars (e.g., Wang Jing 1996, 21) criticize the philosopher, pointing out that this kind of subjectivity could "hardly be associated with any sense of autonomy, since it is conceived first and foremost as an end product of socialization" (ibid.). However, they seem to overlook the fact that, for Li, social practice, education, and other crucial dimensions of the socialization process were anything but absolutely determining, for they included the component of free will.

them in the constant procedure of social production. For him, this is the main reason why humans are not determined by their biological existence but are seen as evolving from the concrete historical process of social practice (Lin 1992, 979). On the other hand, humanness, i.e., the human nature in terms of what essentially characterizes human beings, is by no means identical to social nature in the simple sense of group nature, as the latter is also distinctive for animals. Li emphasizes that many kinds of animals create certain models of organization and divisions of labor, and even a kind of “moral behavior” or certain types of “altruism” with individual sacrifice for the preservation of the group or the kind (Li, Zehou 1986, 135). Li is a historical materialist, and hence, he frequently points out that human beings must primarily ensure their bodily existence before they occupy themselves with anything else. Nevertheless, the cultural-psychological aspects that manifest themselves in various social, ritual and linguistic scopes characteristically detach humans from other animals. According to Li Zehou, this difference arises precisely because humans—through their engagement in practice—possess subjectality.

Proceeding from Kant's three *Critiques*, Li also aimed to explain his notion of subjectality through the lens of epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics. Because of the specific focus of the present study, we shall concentrate in this respect upon Li's ethical connotations of the term.

For him, a coherent philosophy of mind cannot be reduced to epistemological issues. Therefore, Li's subjectality necessarily includes the ideals, intentions, and sense of responsibilities of the subjects. All these important elements pertain to human ethical principles and the free will of the human subject (Li Zehou 1994, 469).

In this context, Li Zehou proceeds from the significance of Kant's categorical imperative and emphasizes the elementary value of human beings: each individual life is meaningful simply because it is human (ibid., 468). In his view, the fundamental construction of human psychology is defined by the factors of *qing* 情 (sensitivity and emotions), will, and concepts. The latter two belong to the concept of human reason: while the will establishes its form, the concepts constitute its content. This fundamental structure, which has been formed through historical sedimentation, is absolute and can in this respect be compared to Kant's categorical imperative.

Li admires Kant for demanding that individuals autonomously establish and follow free will. This requires the human subject to subdue him or herself to assume responsibility for the entire humankind and to fulfill their corresponding duties (ibid., 471). But in contrast to Kant, who saw these forms as completely independent from experiences, Li points out that they merely appear to be transcendental. In his view, they are still influenced by historical, social, and cultural

conditions and concerns. Hence, they are still products of social developments throughout history, even though their alterations and modifications are much too slow to be noticed by concrete individuals. Similarly, the basic structure of free will also belongs to the agglomerations of human reason, which manifest itself in each individual and in all humankind. The sublime quality of free will, however, merely appears to exceed all social and individual interests and causal laws. Free will is transferred from generation to generation throughout the long-lasting course of human evolution as a universal form of reason, which can only be realized by autonomous human subjects. It is not connected to any ethical or moral contents, because these contents can divergently differ from culture to culture or from generation to generation.

Besides, reason alone is not something that would decidedly separate people from their sensuality and thus from other animals, for Li also regards human beings as “rational animals.” The difference between human beings and other species primarily occurs somewhere else, namely in the very realm of specifically human social existence, which is defined by subjectality and includes specific human values. Our mental capacities as such are not essentially divergent from our animal origins, because human psychological formations include an emotio-rational structure (*qingli jiegou* 情理結構), in which reason is melded into animal sensibility. However, here Li—once again—emphasizes that the difference between humans and other species does not depend on language, symbols and information systems, but rather occurs due to the material practice of making and using tools. This practice converts natural laws and struggles for survival into humanness and particular forms of human society. For Li, human reason has been shaped over millions of years, and it is still unceasingly accumulating and changing (*ibid.*). Li’s philosophical ethics does not deal with the animalistic individual, but rather with one who is a part of a collective social existence, including its various mental structures (Li Zehou 1994, 470).

Li Zehou’s notion of subjectality is thus based upon a philosophy that regards both the entire humankind and the individual human beings as subjects. Subjectality naturally includes the so-called inter-subjectivity of human relations. “Subjectality” and “inter-subjectivity” cannot be separated. Hence, “subjectality” itself indicates the product of the interaction between humans as part of communities and natural subjects.

On this basis, Li aimed to reinstall the traditional Chinese concept of humaneness, which he viewed as a specifically Chinese form of humanism (Li Zehou 1980, 89). For him, this was important, because he understood humanism as a significant element of universal human ethics, which has to be

preserved and further developed (1985, 19). However, he warns that the classical notion of traditional European humanism was theoretically weak, because sentiment, cognition, emotion, and moral judgment cannot satisfactorily illuminate the enormously multifaceted developments of the relations between the individual and the society (Gu Xin 1996, 982). Hence, he distanced himself from Rousseau's or Sartre's largely individualistic kind of humanism. On the other hand, he also strongly opposed the rise of subjectivist forms of Western Neo-Marxism and the so-called contemporary Chinese or "socialist" humanism that became fashionable in the prevailing Chinese ideologies at the time. In this context, he warned against its exaggeratedly romanticized and idealized forms. For him, these forms of humanism were dangerous because they could not serve as a suitable tool of social change that could lead to truly substantial results due to their overly sentimental nature. He emphasized that such forms of ideology degraded the traditional Chinese notion of humaneness, which was truly humanistic in its essence. Besides, such idealized and ideologized variations of humanism had nothing to do with his own notion of subjectivity, which he regarded as the real basis of everything that is truly human.

On the other hand, however, Li also sharply disapproved the criticism of humanism that came from neoconservative Chinese intellectuals. In his view, they did not understand the actual social and historical background underlying its basic theory. In his schema of subjectivity Li intended to explain the moral and ethical interpretations of humanism through the lens of historical materialism in order to supersede the contradictions between individual and social as well as between uniqueness and universality. In this context, Lin Min (1992, 984) claims that with his specific notion of subjectivity, Li aimed to bridge the ideological gap between the progressive and the conservative intellectuals in contemporary China. Simultaneously, he highlighted the axiological value of this idea.

In the contemporary societies that are marked by a highly developed technology, the most important questions are increasingly linked to culture and psychology. The problems we face are not problems of economic poverty, but those of spiritual poverty, of loneliness, isolation, and dullness. All these will become the most severe problems of the future world.

在現代科技高度發展的社會，文化心理問題卻愈來愈迫切而突出，不是經濟上的貧困，而是精神上的貧乏、寂寞、孤獨和無聊，將日益成為未來世界的嚴重課題。

Li's notion of subjectality aimed to offer a solution for these new kinds of social alienation. In the scope of this idea, he refused to elaborate on the Marxist analysis of capitalist economy but rather followed the Marxist idea of the person as a self-creative being. In this way, he created new paths for an innovative, critical, and humanistic reinterpretation and development of Marxism.²³ He also criticized voluntarist tendencies of Mao Zedong's ideology and clearly showed that they could be traced back directly to Confucianism (Chong 2005, 246).

4 One-World-View and *Du* 度 as a Dynamic Method of "Grasping the Proper Measure"

Li Zehou's anthropo-historical ontology is based upon the holistic Chinese paradigm of the so-called one-world-view (*yige shijie guan* 一個世界觀), according to which there is only one world, namely the one we experience in our concrete life. In such a view, there is no possibility (and neither a necessity) of establishing another, transcendent, intangible world governed by a "Heavenly Kingdom," by a personalized god, or by any kind of supernatural power. In contrast to the "two-world view," which prevailed in the history of Western philosophy, this holistic paradigm does not include a fix and static differentiation between noumenon and phenomena or body and mind.

Numerous crucial concepts of Li's philosophy—such as the emotio-rational structure, subjectality, sedimentation, or the concept of *du* 度 (which will be explained below)—can only be established and understood within this realm. The "one-world-view" is the very model that enables the complementary functioning of individual humans and the entirety of humankind, reason and emotion, and objective cognition and subjective judgment. This is because the one-world-view is also structured in accordance with a double dimension that comprise both material and spiritual aspects (Li Zehou 2016d, 8). This double dimension manifests itself on the most basic levels of the traditional cosmology: its central notion *tian* 天 can refer either to a non-anthropomorphic deity (in the sense of Heaven) or to the concrete heaven (in the sense of men's natural environment that influences their actual material life).

23 Besides, Li Zehou's concept of subjectality also directly influenced the then emergent shaping of subject-related theories in Chinese literature and literary theory (Lin 1992, 975).

The Chinese one-world-view is not limited to ontological and epistemological factors but also includes ethical implications. In the one-world-view, the thinking subject cannot be separated from the acting subject and the human mind cannot be divorced from its concrete bodily existence. In Chinese philosophy, there is no clear and fix or stagnant separation between epistemology and ethics.

Another important difference between the ethical implications of the Chinese one-world-view and Western ethics pertains to the relation between reason and emotion. In this respect, Li emphasized: “I believe that the focus on the integration of emotion and reason rather than mere reason is the philosophical basis for the major divergence between Chinese ethics and Western ethics” (Li, Zehou 2016, 1069). In his view, traditional Chinese ethics is essentially different from all those discourses that derive their ethical and social principles from some transcendent ideas or deities. There is almost no conception of “pure truth” or “pure reason” in Chinese philosophy. Li claims that because of such a worldview, traditional Chinese ethics puts emphasis on the value of “pragmatic reason” (*shiyong lixing* 實用理性). This kind of rationality differs from the practical or speculative reason²⁴ because it is a historical product of human empirical existence. Thus, it is not completely a priori, nor is it separated from emotions (or intentions) and it does not pursue to detach human beings from the network of the relationships to which they belong. Therefore, it is tightly connected to the so-called culture of pleasure (*legan wenhua* 樂感文化) that marks traditional Chinese culture.²⁵

A typical discourse belonging to the “one-world” model are the Confucian teachings, which advocate an ethics of pragmatic reason and offer people possibilities to strive for a society that upholds the values of human life, concrete experience, and emotion. In Li’s view, such a society enables people to

24 We will comprehensively explain this specifically Chinese non-transcendental form of moral reason in a separate section.

25 In Li’s view, this has been thoroughly reflected in both Chinese literature as well as Chinese philosophy, in the lacking of fear of the unknown and unknowable ultimate spiritual realm, and, hence, in the absence of the sense of guilt or shame. Chinese people were satisfied with the peaceful and harmonious pleasures provided by this unification of body and spirit. Because they didn’t possess faith in an external supreme God, they had to find the meaning and the value of their lives by themselves, without the help of any external forces (Li Zehou 2016, 159). Besides, such culture does not value sacrifice, self-abnegation, or the feeling of failure because of the impossibility of reaching a more desirable realm or state (D’Ambrosio, Carleo, and Lambert 2016, 1059).

discover pleasure and meaning in the worldly life.²⁶ Hence, he believes that “Confucianism can function as a corrective to curb certain shortcomings of modern thought associated with liberalism, formal justice, abstract reason, and notions of the atomic individual” (ibid.).

Here, it is important to note that such a unity of beings naturally also predicates the unity of facts and values. In this context, the contemporary Chinese philosopher Yang Guorong, for instance, also highlights that even though at first glimpse, the real world seems to be determined by diversity rather than by oneness, beings in a world of diversity still do not exist in isolated and disconnected settings (2008, 272). He also points out that although each being is composed of multiple different dimensions, all beings necessarily succeed in holding these dimensions together within themselves. The variety of different features belongs to the level of fact, whereas the unity is rooted in the one world, which, in addition to the facts, also includes values and represents a complex network of relations.

Other theoreticians see the holistic character of traditional Chinese worldview in a different way. For example, the main representative of the second generation of Modern or New Confucianism (*xin rujia* 新儒家), Mou Zongsan 牟宗三, attempted to explain it with the concept of immanent transcendence (*neizai chaoyue* 内在超越), in which spiritual and rational notions have a double ontological nature and can simultaneously belong to both the transcendent and the immanent realm. Li opposed this notion and believed that it is incompatible with the one-world paradigm.

He claims that the idea of immanent transcendence is problematic, especially because Mou tried to elaborate on it within the Kantian framework. On the one hand, Mou followed the Confucian tradition and aimed to establish the moral imperative based on a unity of human and spiritual nature. In Mou’s view, the noumenon is rooted in inherent human morality. Therefore, he believes that notions such as the human heart-mind (*xin* 心) and humanness (or “human nature,” *ren xing* 人性) were “transcendental.” On the other hand, however, he believes in the Western “two-world view,” which separates the realm of noumenon from that of phenomena. In such understanding, transcendent abstract entities were rooted and developed in the concrete actuality

26 In Li’s view, this is also the reason because of which Chinese people find it difficult to accept the formalism in Kant’s ethics: “Filled with a sense of history, the Chinese mind always searches for some historical interpretation. Thus, the ‘transcendental’ and the a-priori must also have their roots in this world, in the movement of history” (Li, Zehou 1999g, 180).

of the material or physical world. They belonged to the noumenal world and simultaneously to the inwardness of concrete human beings. In contrast, Li emphasizes that in this Western framework “transcendence” necessarily means a realm that surpasses experience (Li Zehou 1999, 9).

According to Li, it is completely wrong to lay stress, on the one hand, upon the traditional Chinese notions of the unity of Heaven and people, and, on the other, to explain concepts that are originally confined to the sphere of sensuality and emotions such as “humaneness” or “inborn knowledge” (*liangzhi* 良知) as something immanently “transcendent” or “transcendental.” Further, Li stresses that, precisely because of the “one world-view,” the social and ideational development in ancient China could have led to the culture of pleasure, because in this framework human beings have no tensious relation towards external Deities or fears of god.

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Because of these reasons, Li claims that Chinese philosophy is exclusively immanent and the one-world is merely the concrete world in which we live. The unity of human beings with their social, cultural, and natural environment is achieved within this discrete, empirical, and sensual realm. This unity naturally tends toward harmony or equilibrium, which is not a state but a dynamic process. According to Li, harmony can be accomplished through the dynamic balancing of the ever-changing configuration of what Li denoted as (*du* 度) in the sense of a dynamic “grasping the proper measure,” which is another important idea constituting the core structure of his philosophical system.

However, we must be careful not to interpret these notions, which differ from the prevailing Western philosophical approaches, too superficially. Proper measure is a kind of the “golden mean,” but just as the holism of the one-world-view does not imply that everything in the universe is connected with everything else and that nothing can be separated from anything else, this “golden mean” has nothing to do with mediocracy. In the logic of the one-world-view, *du* is not entirely comparable to the Western notion of “proper measure” but rather represents the starting point and, at the same time, the fundamental approach of the pragmatic reason, which enabled people to implement their practical activities in a way that allowed them to obtain knowledge (and wisdom) necessary for their survival.

Du is a typical classical Chinese category, which is tightly linked to the contents and basic approaches of the Confucian classics *Zhong yong* 中庸 (*The State of Equilibrium or Doctrine of The Mean*). In Li’s system, it is a type

of experience-based reasonableness, which is not determined by a priori reason. It is a dynamic criterion, which seeks to achieve the “middle way” in the mastering of every situation requiring judgments or decisions. Li describes *du* as a vibrant structure of proportions, as something that changes according to the discrete conditions of a certain time and space. He highlights that it is by no means an eternal mediator and it does not always remain always neutral. From an overall perspective, *du* can sometimes be extreme. Due to multifarious human experiences, it is easy to see that in righting wrongs, for instance, it is easy to exaggerate, but on the other hand, without exceeding the proper limits it is difficult to right wrongs. However, here it is important to note that not all wrongs must necessarily be righted. In such contexts, we always need to consider the situation. According to Li (2012b, 58), this is “the art of *du*” (*dude yishu* 度的藝術). In his view, we cannot approach problems of justice or moral duty through abstract conceptions of equality. In general, societies are characterized by various modes of integration and unrelenting diversity rather than equality. Therefore, we should strive to evaluate and grasp the *du* of different actual situations from the stance that takes into consideration the tension between history and morals in order to offer regulations and standards for moral behavior. Since it can only be applied within actual practice, this grasping of the “middle way” is necessarily defined by particularity than by universal laws of some abstract principles. Hence, it involves dealing with situations differently according to their particular conditions.

Therefore, the notion *du* cannot be understood as a simple and stagnant mathematical middle between two different possibilities, but rather a vibrant situational principle (Li Zehou 2012a, 2). It must be found and appropriately applied because in Li’s view concrete problems require concrete analyses. The inner logic of *du* is operational rather than transcendental. Hence, it is not identical to any form of dialectical logic, which is based upon oppositions, but can rather be expressed by the form $A \neq A_{\pm}$, which is different from $A = A$, but also from $A \neq \bar{A}$ (ibid.). This means that it is based upon and functions in accordance with the premise that A is not equal to any form of A , which refers to a kind of general contingency.

The historical experience of humankind (and this is especially clearly visible in China’s social development) can be summarized in the implementation of *du* on different levels of technological development, or, in Marxist terms, the development of the productive powers. Li (2016, 1091) is convinced that we should support economic development insofar as it better human life, but simultaneously, we should remain emotionally aware of the misery that still remains in the world and preserve a sense of compassion toward others in order to allow moral emotion to guide our hold of “proper measure.”

In Li's view, the concept *du* is of vital importance for all human beings because in the process of its development humankind could not have survived if it had not learned to apply it. Even in contemporary societies, *du* is of utmost importance. When reasonably applied, it can help balance, correct, and possibly even replace those aspects of social morality that are potentially harmful or dangerous. It could serve as an alternative criterion to the absolute rule of normative laws, abstract and thus void principles of equal rights, or of a mechanically constructed rational concept of justice. In this context, he suggested that societies should be guided "through virtue rather than utilitarian benefit, free choice, and the market" (Li, Zehou 2016, 1085). He has often emphasized that he valued harmony more than justice, explaining that "'justice' was chiefly a 'rational structure,' while 'harmony' encompassed both, emotion and, reason" (Li Zehou 2014, 2). Li claims that all harmony is to be found in the "regulation and proper constitution" of (modern) social morals by means of human emotio-rational structure and the system of relationalism. For him, this is the highest level of preserving the elementary "common good" and "good life" (Rošker 2019, 155). He also believes that this level is "higher than, though not a replacement for, fair and reasonable notions of justice and their distinction of right from wrong" (Li Zehou 2016, 60). On the other hand, it is important to note that Li's idea of social harmony involves transforming humans through education and cultivation, and hence, it is still established on the basis of justice. As such, harmony is only a "regulative and properly constitutive"²⁷ standard and can by no means be applied as a decisive criterion defining or dominating "justice." Similarly, Li's abovementioned notion of relationalism (*guanxizhuyi* 關係主義), which must be channeled by *du* in the Chinese sense,—dynamically grasping of a "proper measure"—cannot be understood as a negation or a complete annulment of the modern idea of individualism. It merely represents a denial of its absolute dominance. Hence, *du* as a part of the emotio-rational structure could function as a regulative principle for the individualism inherent in modern social morals.

Here, we must not forget that *du* is not a transcendent external force or a pure abstraction, but a genuinely human creation. Therefore, it also plays an important role in controlling human desires, but without pursuing to minimize or even eliminate them. The "State of Equilibrium or the Mean," in which

²⁷ Some readers might wonder how anything could be regulative and constitutive at the same time, for the two notions in question are mostly used contrastively as opposites. However, the stress in this phrase is on the word "properly," and thus the phrase has to be understood as a succession and not as an opposition. First, the society has to be well-regulated, and then after the right conditions have been established in this way, it can be constituted in a proper way.

it is grounded, is thus of paramount importance, for it makes people aware of our limits, while simultaneously inspiring us to see and explore the unlimited space within this limited framework (Li Zehou 1985a, 298). This quest for a “middle way,” for an equilibrium between our desires and the actual boundaries of human life, which presumes negotiating with actuality and aiming to adapt oneself to it without losing one’s own uniqueness and originality, can also be detected in Li’s political philosophy. In this respect, he has always argued for sensible reforms instead of sudden shifts, evolution instead of revolution, and gradual adaptations instead of explosive changes:

Actually, I would like to highlight that all revolutions are harmful, irrespective of the question whether they are leftist or rightist. I have learned this from Chinese experiences.

其實我的主要觀點就是說，因為再革命，不論是左的革命，右的革命，帶來的都是禍害。我這個想法就是吸取中國的經驗教訓。

LI ZEHOU 1999a, 133

Besides, he strove for a “middle way” between two predominant streams of political thought in modern China, namely the liberalist and the essentialist national current:

The appropriate way for China is to choose the abovementioned “*du*.” Both of these currents are exaggerated. The former stresses the market economy and the latter the risks that such economies bear in themselves. The former emphasizes global unification and the latter warns against it. They are both right. Now we have to ask ourselves how to find a *du* to evaluate them. In order to do so, we have to surpass them, because both of them include some severe problems.

中國正確的道路就是我剛才講的，“度”。這兩個都是過了。這個強調市場經濟，那個強調市場經濟帶來的危害，一個強調全球一體化，一個反對，都對啊。怎麼掌握這個東西的度，才是重要的。要超越這兩種東西，因為這兩種理論都有問題。

ibid.

In this sense, *du* also offers an important tool for the establishment of the abovementioned culture of pleasure, for its basic nature is not only epistemological but also ontological. In this context, Li highlights that the Chinese tradition lays stress upon “*du*,” the “middle way,” “harmony,” and “pleasure,”

because it does not merely value the balance of external social relations but also the harmony and the feeling of pleasure in the psychology of the members of society.

Du (dynamic grasping of a proper measure) has to be seen as being in a correlative and complementary relation with particular situations and the people's emotions occurring in these situations:

The core part of the techno-social (or instrumental) substance is "*du*" (the dynamic grasping of a proper measure), while the core element of the psychological substance is "*qing*" (emotion or emotional response to concrete situations). This double substance is mutually shaping one another and is appearing as a unity, similar to the symbol of the double fish that form the unity of the *Taiji* diagram, in which yin and yang are in complementary relation.

工具本體以“度”為核心，心理本體以“情”為核心，雙本體互相塑造而實為一體，好比雙魚負陰抱陽以合成太極圓圖。

LI ZEHOU 2012C, 72

Ethical Thought: an Overview

Li Zehou considers ethics and morality to be of major significance for the contemporary world. Hence, he attached great importance to his ethical thought. This becomes very clear when we investigate the many works in which he repeatedly tried to explain his novel ideas in this realm. He published a summarized account of his ethical thought in his work *An Outline of Ethics*, (*Lunlixue gangyao* 倫理學綱要), which was later—in a somewhat rewritten and restructured form—republished as one of the major parts of his book *Outline of Philosophy* (*Zhexue gangyao* 哲學綱要) and then again in 2016 in the newest version of his *Anthropo-Historical Ontology*. Some of the important aspects of this theory were later published in his more recent works entitled *A Response to Sandel and other Writings*, which was published in Beijing in 2014¹ and *Lunlixue gangyao xupian* 倫理學綱要續篇 [Outline of Ethics—Continuation], respectively. He has also often elaborated upon several specific ethical questions in numerous articles, essays, and interviews. Here, we have at least to mention a few most important ones. These include:

- *Lunli wenti ji qita* 倫理問題及其它 [About Ethics and Other Issues], 2014;
- *Guanyu “Youguan lunlixuede dawen” de buchong shuoming* 關於「有關倫理學的補充說明」 [Additional Explanation to “Some Questions and Answers regarding Ethics”], 2008, 2009;
- *Cong ‘Liangde lun’ tan pushi jiazhi yu Zhongguo moshi* 從「兩德論」談普世價值與中國模式 [On Universal Values and the Chinese Model from the Perspective of the “Theory of Two Moralities”], 2011;
- *Goujian zhengyi jichushangde hexie—cong Sangdeerde “Gongzheng” shuoqi* 構建正義基礎上的和諧—從桑德爾的「公正」說起 [Constructing Righteousness on the Basis of Harmony—On Sandel’s Concept of Justice], 2013.

In several exhaustive interviews and debates with various Chinese scholars, Li has additionally explained many of the complex issues regarding his ethical system. In this regard, I shall only mention two comprehensive debates about

1 This work has been translated into English by Paul D'Ambrosio and Robert A. Carleo. It was published in *Philosophy East and West* in 2016.

the concept of emotion-based substance, one with Liu Xuyuan 劉緒源² (2012) and the other with Liu Yuedi 劉悅笛³ (2014).

In his theory, Li Zehou proceeded from three crucial arguments, which he understood as vital for the understanding of his ethical thought:

The most essential foundations of my ethics rest on three most important distinctions. The first one regards ethics and morality, which have continuously been confused or falsely understood as being synonymous in both China and the Western world: in contrast to previous discourses, I have strictly differentiated between different meanings of these two terms. In my view, ethics consists of external social contents and norms, while morality is a psychological formation or structure. Secondly, in this internal psychological formations or structures, I additionally distinguish between the human abilities (or the rational driving force) on the one hand, and the human feelings (or the emotional auxiliary force) on the other, whereas I lay stress upon the importance of this auxiliary power. Thirdly, in this inner mental formations or structures—including both abilities and sensuality—I also differentiate between different contents belonging to the traditional religious morality on the one, and modern social morality on the other hand.

我的倫理學的要點是做出了三個重要區分。第一是對中外一直都混同使用的倫理 (ethics) 道德 (morality) 兩詞做了前所未有的嚴格的詞義區分, 即將倫理作為外在社會內容、規範和道德作為內在心理形式、結構的區分。第二是在內在心理形式、結構上, 又做了人性能力 (理性動力) 與人性情感 (情感助力) 的區分, 並強調情感助力的重要性。第三就是內在心理形式、結構 (包括能力和情感) 含有傳統宗教性與現代社會性的不同內容的區分。

LI ZEHOU 2016b, 158

Since they are vital for the understanding of his thought, let us take a closer look at these three crucial foundations of Li Zehou's ethics. As we have seen, he emphasized that the first precondition for the establishment of any coherent ethical theory was a necessity to draw an explicit and clear discrimination line between ethics and morality. He pointed out that ethics must be seen as a

2 "Qing benti" de waitui yu neitui 「情本體」的外推與內推 [The Extension and Intention of the Emotion-based Substance].

3 Cong "Qing benti" fansi zhengzhi zhixue 從「情本體」反思政治哲學 [Reflecting on Political Philosophy from the Perspective of Emotion-based Substance].

system of regulating inter-human relationships and human actions in the particular network of associations and connections. Morality, on the other hand, belongs to the internal psychological forms and values of particular individuals. In other words, ethics is external and consists of systems, customs, norms, rituals, laws, etc. Morality, on the other hand, is internal and embraces will, ideas or concepts, and emotions.

External aspects are of primary importance because external ethics is gradually incorporated into human inwardness and shapes the basis of the structure of human moral mind. The main elements that constitute this structure are human will, concepts or ideas, and emotion. The former two belong to reason: the concepts or ideas represent the contents of reason, and the will constitutes its form. This form, however, is absolute and can be compared to Kant's categorical imperative. It is the form of free will, which is unconditional and represents a universal necessity. It has been shaped through historical sedimentation from different concepts, which belong to the contents of reason. As we have seen above, morality as a psychological formation of human inwardness is composed from reason and emotions. Even though Li has often criticized modern Western ethical theories (including Kant's) because they were exclusively focusing on rational elements without considering the vital role of human emotions, he still emphasizes the primary role of reason, especially of the free will.

In addition, Li also emphasized that morality itself could further be divided in two parts: an external part, which manifests itself in the modern social moralities, as well as an internal part, which forms the core of traditional religious moralities⁴ (Li Zehou 2016b, 17). In present times, similar to morality, ethics can also be divided into two central discourses. First, it is a part of political philosophy that mainly deals with problems of (human) rights, justice, and the structure of social power. Second, it also often occurs in the framework of religious philosophy in which it is mainly connected to questions regarding the concept of goodness (*ibid.*, 19). Actually, these two areas of ethics are standing in an analogous relation with Li Zehou's aforementioned distinction between two kinds of morality, which will be treated in detail in later chapters of this book. However, the most important and fundamental distinction, which has to be considered when dealing with Li's ethical thought, is the fundamental distinction between ethics and morality, which has been explained above and will be elucidated in greater detail in the following sections. Here, we shall only once again summarize this difference by exposing that ethics

4 For a more detailed explanation of these categories, see the section "Two Kinds of Morality" in Chapter 4.

mainly deals with external social norms and regulations of relations and patterns of behavior between people living in a certain culture, group, society or community, whereas morality belongs to mental formations constituting and being reflected in individual consciousness. Hence, while morality is a psychological formation of human inwardness, ethics—among others—also includes traditional conventions, customs, socially integrated habits, and ceremonies. It is also important to note that Li's distinction between ethics and morality is very different from the one that was established and applied by most contemporary Western philosophers and other representatives of Neo-Marxism, Critical theory, and pragmatism.⁵

In a certain sense, Li Zehou's ethics can be seen as a comparative discourse of moral philosophy between East and West. In this discourse, he often concentrated on the relation between reason and emotion. Although he has held modern Western moral philosophy and ethics (especially Kant's ethics) in high esteem, he still criticized it for its almost exclusive focus upon reason and rationality. In his view, Kant's structure of universal moral laws completely lacked any consideration of human emotions. In contrast to such understandings, Li claimed that *qing* (情) in the sense of human emotion (or the spontaneous responsiveness to concrete situations) should be seen as a foundation of ethics. In this regard, he critically retained the legacy of traditional Chinese ethical thought, but without neglecting the development of Western moral philosophy (Cai 2011, 255). On the other hand, Li accentuates that even though morality as a psychological formation of human inwardness is composed from reason and emotions, the most important element and the driving power of moral behavior is the rational will, whereas *qing* (情) (as emotionality) is only secondary and can be seen as a kind of auxiliary force. Li emphasizes that, as such, he is much closer to Kant than to Hume.

Similar to Kant, Li saw morality—which was, in his view, the inner dimension of human axiological conscience—as a system of self-imposed constraints or regulations, standing in sharp contrast to those imposed to us from outside and by force. In this regard, he emphasized that such a view is not only a constitutive part of Kant's categorical imperative, but also represents a core part of Confucian ethics.⁶ Li was especially interested in the question: From where these universal principles were derived, or, in other words, what were

5 In his own view, Li's distinction is much clearer and less ambiguous than the ones that were constructed by these theoreticians.

6 According to Li, this basic paradigm could clearly be seen in both original teachings as well as in later developments of Confucianism. Hence, it was formulated in ancient ideas (e.g., in the concept of cosmic structure *tian li* 天理) as well as in numerous Neo-Confucian notions (e.g., Wang Yangming's 王陽明 idea of inborn knowledge *liang zhi* 良知).

the origins of ethical normativity. In both Chinese and Western traditions, he identifies certain tendencies to describe these origins with transcendent concepts such as “pure reason,” “God,” “Heaven (*tian* 天),” or the Way (*dao* 道). In his view, however, morality could not be reduced to “religious morality,” which means that its universal principles were not purely *a priori*, but had to be attributed to “social morality” in the sense of common social values and rules that govern any concrete society and are necessary for its existence and development.

Against this background, Li pointed out certain specific features of traditional Chinese moral philosophy, particularly Confucianism. In this context, *qing* (as emotionality or emotional responsiveness to situations) was the basis of morality and manifested itself as a mutual care or empathy between individuals that was derived from people’s sociality. However, in the development of Confucian ethics, reason was especially important, for it served as the basis of the propriety of social order. It regulated the cultivation of emotion and elevated natural affections to “reasoned emotions” (Cai Zhen 2011, 256). Since in this schema, emotions were guided and regulated by reason, the blending of emotion and reason was the core of Confucian ethics. In this context, Li emphasized that although Kant accurately understood that moral limits were, in fact, rational guidelines, he failed to explain the problem of why people were motivated to follow moral orders. In this context, some interpreters, like Cai Zhen (2011), claim that Li Zehou focused his theory upon the Confucian ethics of emotion: “Since the motivation that actually moves people to act morally must be related to emotion, Confucian’s emphasis on emotion’s priority over reason had stronger explanatory power in this regard” (*ibid.*). However, this interpretation is rather questionable, because as already mentioned, Li sees rationality as the primary driving force of moral action; in his view, emotions are merely an auxiliary (though very important) faculty. On the other hand, Li attempted to underline the importance of Confucian ethical discourses by comparing them with the axiological framework of current theories of human evolution that highlight the inherent connection between human ethics and their natural sociality.

The schema below offers a general outline of his approach to ethics and morality. As we will see later, rituals form a very important part of his ethical theory. In Li’s view, they have been generated from the concept of *qing* (情) in the sense of general social or collective emotionality and lead in the process of collective history and individual socialization to reason, which governs *qing* (情) in the sense of individual feelings and emotions. Hence, it was this very historical process that caused the remolding of external and collective ethical regulations into individual morality:

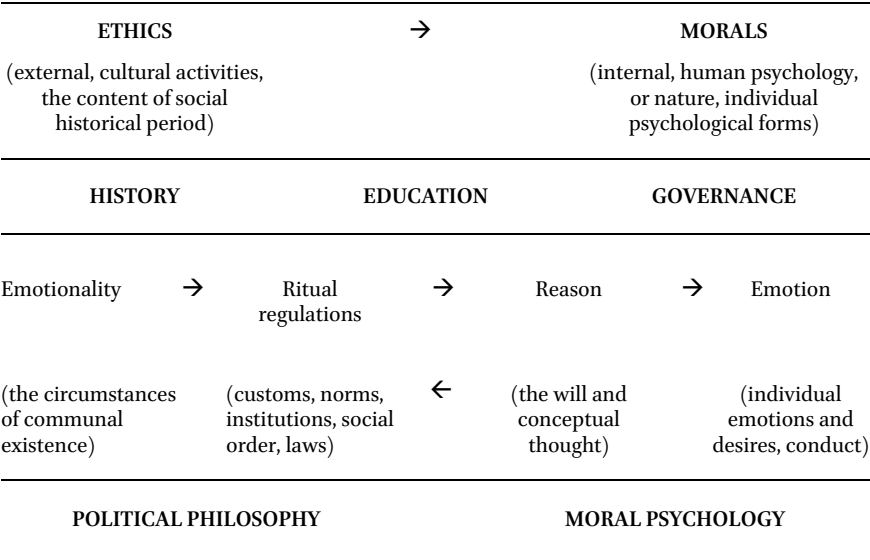


FIGURE 3 Simplified scheme of ethics
LI, ZEHOU 2016, 1079

Similar to several other aspects of his philosophy, Li’s main inspiration in the context of ethics comes from Chinese tradition, especially from Confucian ethical thought. By nature, ethics is an important—and often even constitutive—part of any philosophy. However, in comparison to Western philosophy, ethics as a vital portion of philosophical thinking has been far more emphasized throughout the course of Chinese intellectual history. In China, it also received much greater attention both theoretically and practically.

In his theoretical discourses on ethics, Li mostly followed the basic contents and methods that prevailed in his own tradition, creatively transforming them to a new, modernized axiological system that could become a reasonable and applicable tool for constructing a new ethics for all people, living in the globalized societies of the twenty-first century.

On the other hand, Immanuel Kant’s philosophy was an essential source of Li Zehou’s theory. Kant was important not only for his epistemological and aesthetic thought, but also represented a vital inspiration for Li’s thought in the field of ethics. One could say that in Li’s own fusion of the Kantian and Confucian ethics the latter was eventually much more important, and the previous was more or less understood as a kind of a complement (Li Zehou 2016b, 212). However, Kant certainly played an important role in Li’s ethical system. Li emphasized many times that Kant was the first and leading representative of deontological ethics, and that therefore any debate on ethics could

not overlook his work (Li Zehou 2016, 71). Hence, it is by no means coincidental that Li devoted two long chapters of his first important theoretical book, *Critique of Critical Philosophy (A New Approach to Kant)*,⁷ to Kant's central ethical work, namely, the *Critique of Practical Reason*.⁸ He very much appreciated Kant's notion of the categorical imperative and emphasized his presumption that human beings should always represent the ultimate goal and never be looked upon merely as some means of reaching some external objective.

However, Li strongly opposed ethical relativism, even though this ethical view is often also understood as being grounded in Kant's philosophy, particularly in his highlighting the role of the human subject in creating reality. Although Li recognized that in politics, such a view could offer some help in defending the rights of different minorities and other marginalized or excluded social groups, he was still convinced that its essential and conceptual grounds are theoretically superficial and trivial. He criticized it for its failure to understand the basic fact that all kinds of ethics necessarily share the same universal forms that are handed down from one generation to the next. In this sense, ethical relativism necessarily leads to the negation of the important role of subjective activity and the free will of the autonomous individual (Chong 1999, 165).

Li also intensely respected the emerging of reason in Kant's philosophy of Enlightenment, although he mainly understood it as the result of an incipient modernity, and not as a universal transcendental principle. He emphasized that reason cannot be "pure" in the Kantian sense. For him, it was rather a strong reaction to the requirements and inclinations of its era and an echo of the powerful voices of the French Revolution. In Li's view, Kant's pure and practical reason was thus a child of the Enlightenment movement, a manifestation of his rejection of feudalism and his claims for freedom, independence, and equality (Li Zehou 2007, 302).

For Li, the notion of transcendental practical reason was problematic because it led to the idea of the absoluteness of values, which he decisively rejected. (Li Zehou 2016b, 215). He also criticizes the stagnant and inflexible nature of Kant's a priori forms of knowledge. For Li, Kant's view of universal necessity, in which these forms were embedded, was too one-dimensional, unable to transform or modify itself in the process of human evolution. Therefore, in Li's view, these forms were merely empty shapes of abstract outlines, firmly and immovably stuck in the insubstantial world of transcendental reality (Li Zehou 2007,

7 The original Chinese title of the book is *Pipan zhaxuede pipan (Kangde shuping)* 批判哲學的批判 (康德述評).

8 In this book, I have used the German original entitled *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* (see Kant 1913).

316). In his understanding, Kant's philosophy was still caught into an idealist framework, which he unequivocally rejected. He criticized the Kantian understanding of practical reason because due to its transcendental nature, this kind of reason was completely disconnected from concrete human beings and the societies in which they lived. Hence, Li reproached this view through promoting an ahistorical interpretation of reality, one that apparently surpassed every kind of development, even the evolvement of concrete human beings and the humankind as a whole.

In this context, Li preferred the Confucian (or traditional Chinese) notion of human reason, which he named pragmatic reason (*shiyong lixing* 實用理性). This kind of reason is not entirely comparable to pure rationality as the one that prevailed in the history of Western philosophy, but is rather a specific form of human reasonableness. It arises and operates within the so-called emotio-rational structure (*qingli jiegou* 情理結構) of the human mind. It is rooted in tangible human conditions and functions in accordance with human social emotionality, converting these socially incorporated universal collective emotions through rites in the process of "condensation" or "solidification" of reason (*lixing ningju* 理性凝聚) into rational concepts of right and wrong or good and evil. The common rationality of these concepts influences and directs individual subjective emotions of each member of society. In the concrete developments of social life, however, these rational concepts can dissolve and become essential parts of individual feelings. Li denotes this process, which takes place in individual psychology, with the phrase, "the melting of reason" (*lixing ronghua* 理性融化).

Li emphasized that pragmatic reason is a mental formation, which arises as a product of a dynamic historical development. It is a part of inborn human capacities similar to the ones contained in the traditional Chinese understanding of humanness (*ren xing* 人性). In Li's philosophy, this idea is seen as a dynamic human capacity, which inter alia includes human reason. As such, pragmatic reason arises from the dynamic evolvement of humanness. Thus, in contrast to Kant's practical reason, which represents an unchangeable a priori form belonging to a set of "universal necessities," Li's pragmatic reason is shaped in and proceeds from more realistic and earthly human foundations. This tight connection between Li's notion of pragmatic reason and the entirety of humanness (*ren xing*) reveals the crucial dissimilarity between human beings and animals (Li Zehou and Liu Xuyuan 2011, 77). Following this train of thought, Li also presented his own, distinctive explanation of this difference: in contrast to traditional interpretations, which linked the uniqueness of human beings with upright posture, social norms, simple ways of making and using utensils, or primitive forms of language and communication, he offered a theory that is derived from early Marxism and its emphasis on

material practice. In Li's view, the abovementioned features are not uniquely and specifically human, for they can also be observed in the behavior of some kinds of animals. In contrast to traditional assessments, Li identifies the critical dissimilarity in the fact that, for human beings, the making and using of tools is a kind of universal necessity (*ibid.*). If humans had only their bodily biological settings to depend on, they could never survive or evolve further (as human beings). Hence, for Li, humans are "supra-biological" (*chao shengwu* 超生物) beings.

In contrast to this view, Kant understood universal necessity in an entirely different way, suggesting that the *a priori* forms of reason were parts of specific human mental structures, which exist prior to experiences and are completely separated from them. Kant exposed the transcendental nature of these forms, but did so without clarifying their source. In contrast, Li attempted to unravel the enigma of their origin, suggesting a new theory based upon the presumption that "the empirical is being transformed into the transcendental" (*jingyan bian xianyan* 經驗變先驗) (Li Zehou 2016b, 29). In this theory, the individual transcendental forms of human mind were shaped from joint human experience through long periods of historic sedimentation as a part of human cultural-psychological formations.

In his first comprehensive theoretical work, the *Critique of Critical Philosophy*, Li already brought this issue to the very point, emphasizing that Kant's "universal necessity" should be replaced by "objective sociality" (*keguan shehuixing* 客觀社會性):

In my book "Critique of Critical Philosophy," I have repeatedly explained that Kant's so-called universal necessity is, in fact, objective sociality (which is sometimes also called social objectivity). This universal necessity is guided, shaped and accumulated through the history of particular periods and societies.

[批判] 書裡一再講 Kant 所謂的普遍必然性，實際上是客觀社會性（有時稱之為社會客觀性），它們的普遍必然是一定的時代，社會，歷史所規定，形成和積累的普遍必然。

LI ZEHOU 2016b, 326–327

In this context, Li points out that humankind as such, as well as humanness as our defining characteristics, are both products of history. This fusion of basic human features with the evolvement of humankind *per se*, is a central supposition and simultaneously the basic method of his anthropo-historical ontology. Hence, this approach lies at the center of his investigation of ethical questions. Therefore, ethics represents a logically coherent part of his

philosophical system, in which he was always (irrespective of the concrete discipline or field he was elaborating on) proceeding from the specific elements that make human beings human.

With this in mind, it is easier to understand why Li saw human reason as consisting of two parts: conceptual thought or comprehension and the will. As we have seen, the latter is the form of reason, while the former represents its contents, namely the notions of good and evil, right and wrong (Li Zehou 2016b, 210). Li explained this in the following way:

Human will is our capacity of attentive, conscious, rational control, and domination of reason over our sensitivity. This is the psychological power of the form of reason. But what are the concrete contents of this reason? These are the concepts of good and evil, right and wrong.

意志是人的自覺、有意識的理性對感性的支配、主宰的能力，這是心理的理性形式力量，但這理性的具體內容是什麼，便是善惡、是非觀念。

LI ZEHOU 2016b, 210

As already mentioned, reason is—in contrast to Kant's notion—seen as a historical concept that cannot be reduced to any fixed and unchangeable a-priori mental forms, for it is shaped through the pragmatic requirements and necessities of human social life.

In the framework of anthropo-historical ontology, the “a-priori” form of reason is seen as imbedded in the preservation and the evolution of the sustainable survival of humankind as an entirety (not of any particular group or community existing in any concrete time and space).

In this context, the central Confucian virtue of humaneness (*ren* 仁) is also of utmost importance. Although it is tightly linked to Li's view of human inborn capacities or humanness (*ren xing* 人性), it forms a part of a specifically Chinese (or East Asian) cultural-psychological formation (*wenhua—xinli jiegou* 文化—心理結構), which manifests itself in the so-called emotion-based substance (*qing bentì* 情本體) shaped on the culturally determined level of sedimentation (*jidian* 積澱). Li explains:

Up till today, I am still insisting that “humaneness” is a structure that incorporates four aspects. It is a special configuration of inborn human capacities (humanness), which is composed of “the kinship basis, psychological principles, humanism, and the individual personality.” As I have pointed out in my work *Reading the Analects Today*, it can be equated with the so-called emotio-rational structure or the emotion-based substance. It

implies a mutual interaction between reason and emotion, which makes us different from animals and also from rational machines. This is the core notion of my theory of humanness, which I have not changed for several decades.

我至今仍然堅持「仁」是這個四方面的結構體，即由「血緣基礎、心理原則、人道主義和個體人格」所形成的人性結構，也就是我後來「論語今讀」所提出的「情理結構」(emotio-rational structure) 即「情本體」(emotion-based substance)，其中的情理交融既區別於禽獸動物，也區別於理性機器，這是我數十年沒有變動的人性論的觀點圓心。

LI ZEHOU 2015, 118

In Li's system, emotion and reason are a comprehensive entity, consisting of two oppositional notions, the functioning of which is defined by a mutually interactive, correlative, and complementary relation. Such a unity also represents the foundation of the so-called emotio-rational structure of the human mind. In Chinese culture, it operates on the basis of the emotion-based substance. In Li's view, such a substance could surpass the "coldness" (Li Zehou 1985, 21) and exaggerated individuality contained in contemporary Western theories of rationality:

Postmodern philosophies have broken out of the narrow cage of the enlightened reason. But, on the other hand, they are negating and destroying humanness. Therefore, I would like to propose a step forward on this new way with the help of the "emotion-based substance," which is based upon Chinese tradition.

後現代哲學打破了啟蒙理性的牢籠，但終究是否定性、破壞性的；提出以中國傳統為依據的“情本體”，就是要在它的基礎上再往前走一步。

LI ZEHOU AND LIU XUYUAN 2012, 14

We must not forget that in this coherent structure, reason is the primary, decisive, controlling, and guiding element. However, the functioning and the impact of this specific formation, which in China is implanted in the ontology of emotion-based substance, can by no means be reduced to the sphere of ethics, for it is also tightly linked to political philosophy. The impact of the emotion-based substance is not limited only to individuals, their actions and behaviors, or to their particular experiences. It is firmly set in the traditional Confucian ethics, in which the Way (*Dao* 道) and the rites (*li* 禮) both begin at and arise from (collective) emotionality (see *Guodian chu mu zhu jian* 1989, Yu

cong 11: 179.). Therefore, it is also a social, historical, and political substance. This incorporation of emotion into politics corresponds to Li's proposal regarding the two kinds of morality, which will be explained in detail in later parts of this book. According to this differentiation, the religious morality should "guide by example and appropriately construct" (*fandao he shidang goujian* 範導和適當構建) the social morality.

In regard to both ethics and political philosophy, Li does not agree with the normative regularity of Western Enlightenment models (Li Zehou and Liu Xuyuan 2012: 15). In this respect, he established the concepts of intention (*neitui* 內推) and extension (*waitui* 外推) of the emotion-based substance. The former pertains to the realm of individual human inwardness, while the latter manifests itself in social and political interactions (*ibid.*).

The intention of the emotion-based substance (*qing bentide neitui* 情本體的內推) pertains to the specifically Chinese traditional philosophy, in the context of which religion should be replaced by aesthetics.⁹ Its extension (*qing bentide waitui* 情本體的外推), on the other hand, is an emotion-based political philosophy, which holds that "music is integrated into the governance" (*yue yu zheng tong* 樂與政通) and that "harmony is higher than justice" (*hexie gaoyu zhengyi* 和諧高于正義). This last statement is rather controversial as it can easily be misunderstood especially by readers who are unfamiliar with the essence or the complex scope of the traditional Chinese notion of harmony.¹⁰ Because of these misunderstandings, Li has repeatedly explained the notion and its specific context. He highlighted that justice and harmony are products of entirely different social, political, and ideational backgrounds. The notion of justice was shaped in a tradition of universality, which emphasized the equality of all humans, while the idea of harmony was highly situational and contextual, which means that it was tightly linked to concrete situations that were always connected to particular relational, social, and axiological contexts. Besides, the Chinese notion of harmony was realized and fulfilled in and through social rituality. In contrast to such a background, the elementary criterion by which

9 In premodern and modern China, this proposition and the controversial debates connected with it has a rather long history. I will explain the background and the contents of these debates in later parts of this book.

10 Among other issues, these misunderstandings are also arising from the observation of recent ideological misuses of the notion of harmony. Li Zehou proceeds from the supposition, according to which the concept of harmony in original Confucian teachings and in other prevailing traditional discourses is not connected with any form of social oppression in order to establish "peace, discipline and order" in a unified, autocratic society. These traditional discourses have never propagated superficial conflict avoidance at any price. On the contrary, the Confucian idea of harmony is founded upon diversity (see Rošker 2013, Li Chenyang 2014).

human interactions and relations were regulated in accordance with justice, was normative law. Li demonstrated the fundamental differences between these two regulative criteria of human interactions and social life in the following contrastive scheme, in which he highlighted seven crucial differences between them (Li Zehou and Liu Xuyuan 2012, 16):

	Law (fa 法)	Ritual (li 禮)
1.	Written formal norms	Unwritten regulations and principles (based on the “Classics”)
2.	Emphasis on universality and normative definitions; striving for egalitarianism, equal rights, and consistency	Emphasis on situations and conditions, specificities, and differences; greater flexibility; individual rights and responsibilities are linked to emotionality
3.	Demands obedience and passivity	Demands individual consciousness, self-awareness, and activity
4.	Only considers public morality, which should be respected and reflected in behavior, without taking into account private (internal, personal) morality	Composed of two aspects, namely public morality (public behavior) and private morality (internal cultivation), which complement one another and can be fused into a unity
5.	Sanctions are issued exclusively by governmental institutions	Considers public opinion, its sanctions, and condemnation
6.	Incorporates instrumentality (it is, in itself, a tool or a means)	Incorporates purposiveness (it is a purpose in itself)
7.	Is not linked to emotions (and neither to humaneness)	Is connected to emotiveness (it is a result of the humaneness)

In establishing his theory of the two kinds of morality, which forms the very foundation of his ethics and political philosophy, Li highlighted the importance of the fact that in China, a normative law-based Legalism (*fǎ jiā* 法家) only prevailed for a brief period of fifteen years during the short-lived Qin Dynasty (221–206 BC). Its successor, the Han Dynasty (206 BC–AD 220), however, was still confronted with the question of how to rule over a giant unified superpower-state. In addressing this problem, the court scholar Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 took (hitherto already widely forgotten) Confucianism as a basis for the new social and political doctrine. However, in his system Confucian rituality complemented the Legalist concept of law (Rošker 2019, 245). Such an incorporation of several Legalist essentials into the structure of original

Confucianism led to the “blending of ritual and law” (*li fa jiaorong* 禮法交融) and to the “reciprocal utilization of Confucianism and Legalism” (*Rufa huyong* 儒法互用). In Li’s view, this synthesis was tremendously significant for the further development of the Chinese state and society. He accentuates that in working out this combination, Dong accomplished a “transformative creation” (*zhuanhuaxingde chuangzao* 轉化性的創造). He also thinks that in contemporary China, which is also marked by transitional elements (similar to the period of the Han rule), it is high time to find and apply a new transformative creation (*ibid.*). In this context, Li Zehou highlights the need for contemporary China to enact and adhere to a strict division between state and religion, advocating a firm differentiation between “public social morality” (*shehuixing gongde* 社會性公德) and “private religious morality” (*zongjiaoxing side* 宗教性私德).¹¹ This is important in order to deconstruct the traditional “trinity of politics, ethics, and religion” (*zhengzhi, lunli, zongjiao san he yi* 政治、倫理、宗教三合一). Actually, this “trinity” is nothing else but the traditional “rule of one man” (*ren zhi* 人治) (Li Zehou and Liu Xuyuan 2012, 16).

Li Zehou also strongly emphasized that it was tremendously important not to conceal the hierarchic boundary between reason and emotion in which the latter aspect was controlled by the former. He was convinced that in China, this could lead to favoritism and to the absolutism of the so-called human feelings (*ren qing* 人情), a notion that is presently all too often misused to cover up private interests or a greedy desire for power (Rošker 2019, 245). The Chinese people must not allow such negative aspects or misinterpretations of their own tradition to overrule the modern legal system in their society.

On the other hand, traditional “private religious morality” can guide by example and thus influence or to help appropriately construct the “public social morality.” Before tolerating such an influence, we must first make sure that there is a clear distinction between these two kinds of morality. The influence of the private religious morality can be permitted and launched only after the definite establishment of the public social morality in the sense of John Rawls’ “overlapping consensus”¹² and on the basis of a well-developed modern economy. In such an ideal case, the private religious morality could unfold its genuine essence as a morality of cosmic sentiment and human warmth

11 The difference between these two types of morality will be explained in detail in the section, “Two Kinds of Morality” in Chapter 4.

12 According to Rawls, the integration of universally accepted public political values, which can lead to social stability, can only be implemented within a shared space in which various reasonable comprehensive doctrines can overlap. He presented this hypothesis, which is widely known as a notion of “overlapping consensus” in his work *A Theory of Justice* (Rawls 1979). This work represents an attempt to establish a compatibility of Kant’s notion of autonomy with the idea of justice in the sense of fairness.

(Rošker 2019, 246). In such case, private religious morality could reveal its aesthetic power. A society in which such a union or synthesis of both kinds of morality could be achieved, could truly be identified with the emotion-based substance of Chinese culture.

Li criticized the ahistorical nature of the common understanding of justice in modern liberalist societies. He claimed that such connotations of the concept are, in essence, imbedded in Kant's transcendental ethics, for in such frameworks, justice is always defined through abstract rational principles. In his view, most people never ask themselves why communities and societies actually require rational laws, which guarantee individual freedom of choice, equal rights, the implementation of the categorical imperative, or the greatest pleasure for the greatest number of population. Irrespective of the question to which particular line of thought they belonged, i.e., no matter whether they were utilitarian, libertarians, or liberalist, such questions are seldom discussed. Even though general ideas of cooperative agreements that should serve individual advantages and safety were often debated, the question about the origins, conditions and real possibilities of establishing such agreements are seldom raised. Therefore, Li emphasized that "without reference to historical factors, there is very little to say in this regard, and we can only come to suppositional rational postulations" (Li, Zehou 2016, 1076).

Li Zehou's alternative to the modern Western concepts of liberalism and individualism is based on his understanding and his interpretation of traditional Chinese culture. He tries to place this alternative into the framework of his theory of the "typically Chinese" psychological formations that is determined by the fusion of emotion and reason, which is embedded into the emotion-based substance. In his view, such psychological formations allow people to relatively smoothly live together with the members of their families, but also function well within wider social groups and communities. All of these specific features are defined by a specifically East Asian paradigm of social interactions, which Li named relationalism (*guanxizhuyi* 關係主義). He saw this notion as standing in sharp contrast to individualism, which, in his view, stresses personal independency, and enfold separateness, exclusiveness and exclusion of the Other. He critically questioned basic standards underlying the majority of modern Western political theories that mainly placed their basic approaches into the framework of the Aristotelian virtue ethics, which rested on the concept of individuality. Even though according to him, traditional Chinese ethics also belonged to a broader conception of virtue ethics, it differed from traditional European ethical thought, which was originally formed on the basis of the ancient Greek idea of free civil society of equal individuals. In the course of later developments, Judeo-Christian concepts of final

judgment before God in which all individuals were likewise equal also had a profound impact on these lines of thought. In traditional China, however, communities were mainly shaped according to the relations within the network of kinship systems, which were, in contrast to such basic, individual centered feature of traditional European ethics—based on the inequality of the clan members. This system was rooted on the advanced development of Chinese culture in the Neolithic era. In this period, the social production was based on small agricultural communities, the functioning of which was founded on strong and clearly defined kinship relations. Such a system led to the establishment of tribal clans, which was connected with a necessary shift in the ideational superstructure. This shift could be put into effect with the help of the rationalization of shamanistic rituality. Together these factors shaped a specifically Chinese ethics of relationalism,¹³ in which the individual self-awareness was defined through their relationships with other members of their society. In this framework, individual identity was shaped through their relations with other people, and this specific characteristic of societal structure gradually led to the transformation of the idea of relationalism into a “traditional unconscious” (*chuantong wuyishi* 傳統無意識) (Li Zehou 2016, 1079).

In the Western cultural areas, however, a comparable feature of “traditional unconscious” was—due to the prevailing ideologies, described above—mainly defined by individualism. The distinction between the emphasis on relationalism and individualism respectively is a fundamental dissimilarity between the two types of ethics that correspondingly prevailed in the Chinese and in the Euro-American cultural milieus (Rošker 2019, 247). On the other hand, Li also problematized the Western concept of communitarianism. He saw this idea, which has been held in high esteem by several notable Western and Chinese theoreticians, as only applicable to modern countries and cultures with a

13 Li Zehou's concept of relationalism fits well into the prevailing sinological interpretations of traditional Chinese ethics, particularly into the notion of the so-called role ethics, developed by Henry Rosemont and Roger T. Ames (Ames 2011, Rosemont and Ames 2009). They coined this new term because Confucian relational ethics (or, in Li's words, “relationalism”) is not in accord with any of the existing Western categories of ethical thought. In contrast to the Western image of the individual, entering into particular social relations as an independent, isolated self, the Confucian type of person is role-constituted. This does not imply that people would play a particular set of roles. In this framework, people live their roles because they cannot be abstracted from their relations with other fellow humans. This understanding has been placed into Ames's concept of process ontology, in which there are no substances that bear property or essence; every existence is dynamic and relational (Elstein 2015, 242). In such understanding, it is completely natural that the community exists before the individual, for the latter is constituted through social relations and cannot exist without them (Rošker 2019, 150).

long liberalist tradition. In his essay “A Response to Michael Sandel and Other Matters,” he emphasized that communitarianism “is the product of developed countries with long traditions of liberalism. It has referential value, but if directly or indiscriminately adopted in other societies can be quite dangerous” (Li, Zehou 2016, 1086). However, it would be wrong to say that Li absolutely negated the idea of liberalism as such. For him, it was far more reflective of and suitable to the needs of modern social life than, for instance, utilitarianism, which had little regard for the minority and its individuals. Li pointed out that such an attitude could give rise to enormous difficulties and could even lead to tragedies. The suggestion of “greatest happiness for the greatest number,” for instance, could be appropriated in service of austere religious discriminations and even genocides.

In this regard, he nevertheless recommended a different kind of liberalism. Although he criticized exaggerated liberalist emphasis on individualism as a basic social system, he still acknowledges that the main value of this line of thought can be found in its highlighting the need to protect individual rights:

Liberalism stresses that all people are ends in themselves and should not be used as instruments or means. It emphasizes individuals’ freedom to choose and make decisions for themselves. This hugely elevates the position and value of the individual, as well as respect for personal character, and thereby liberates the individual from various forms of enslavement by the past’s political and economic systems, traditional customs, and ideologies.

LI ZEHOU 2016, 1084

He also pointed out that in certain aspects, liberalism was similar to his own idea of a “modern social morality” (*xiandai shehuixing daode* 現代社會性道德), which will be treated in detail in the next chapter. According to Li Zehou, both notions were equally based on ideas such as tolerance, democracy, equality, independence, and freedom. On the other hand, they also embraced neutrality of values, mutual respect, high evaluation of cooperation and so on. In contrast to numerous promoters of Western liberal ideologies, however, he sees the abovementioned ideas as certain kinds of moral values that were shaped on the foundation of public reason, prevalent in modern societies. He emphasized that it was very important to strictly disconnect all such ideas from any kind of traditional religious moralities¹⁴ that were defined by faith and emotions. He proposed an innovative variant of liberalism, which was considerably more dynamic and historical as the conventional model of this system. But Li

14 This second category of morality will also be explained in more detail in the next chapter.

also exposes that overall, liberalism as such is still not the best possible system: he claimed that the liberalist order is by no means eternally and universally applicable, and that it should rather be seen as a kind of transitory system. He emphasized that it represents a necessary product of a certain stage or period within the historical development. Liberalism should therefore be seen and understood as a part of historicism. Li believed that we should always bear in mind that history could not end with capitalism and liberal society (*ibid.*, 1136). In order to move forward toward a more ideal future, Li hence proposed certain regulative measures derived from his idea of emotion-based substance, as for instance, the scheme in which “harmony is higher than justice.” According to him, liberalism could be transcended and surpassed precisely with the help of such schemes and regulative systems.

Li also highlighted the intrinsic connection between individualistic liberalism and the shaping and developing of the capitalist system. Because he also emphasized that in many aspects his own theories were based upon “early” Marxism, one could anticipate that he also opposed capitalism as such. He certainly claimed that this system is by no means the best possible or the last stage of history.

However, [Li] does not see the capitalist period as an unbearable one. On the contrary, he is quite fond of the numerous material advantages and the high level of technological development it brought. Hence, he also rejects any violent attempts to destroy it. It is quite understandable in this sense that Li eliminated from Marxism the concepts of class struggle and revolution. On the other hand, precisely these two elements are doubtless the essential driving forces behind the Marxist historical model of dialectical materialism. In light of these circumstances, we might ask ourselves whether Li's philosophy could still be allied with the immensely influential political-economic theory and one of the most dominant discourses of the 20th century, widely known and associated with Marxism.

ROŠKER 2019, 248

In his view of human progress, Li has assumed the method of historical materialism, attempting to use it in order to complement and upgrade Kant's epistemology and ethics. However, by eliminating the concept of class struggle¹⁵ from his own theory, his dialectics of human progress was no longer

15 This diversion does not only pertain to the concept of class struggle—after 1964 he even completely stopped operating with even most basic categories of such discourses, as for instance, with the category of social classes.

based upon social contradictions that could have led to syntheses arising from mutual sublations. “Instead of fighting his way through reciprocally conflicting oppositions towards the revolutionary salvation, he strove for the realization of social progress by means of *du* and harmony” (ibid.). In fact, his change of Marxist foundations was not limited to the concept of class struggle. After 1964, Li entirely stopped working with even the most elementary paradigms of such discourses, as for example, with the category of social classes. He was strictly against any kinds of violent “solutions” of social conflicts. Hence, it is by no means coincidental that Li departed from the Marxist concept of revolution as early as in his thirties.

Woei-Lien Chong exposed that Li wrote against violent disorders as a lever for social changes as early as 1964. She recorded that, although in essence Li’s theoretical systems always remained historical and teleological, his later writings no longer contained gnostic-apocalyptic factors that appeared in his early works. Even though he still used certain points related to such a gnostic-apocalyptic arrangement, he “purified them” off their revolutionary connotations. In this way, Chong showed that he was against the very concept of revolution well before the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. If we consider the political situation in the People’s Republic of China in the sixties, such an attitude at that time was certainly very daring (Chong 1999, 295).

This elementary aversion against violence was even more explicit in his book *Farewell to Revolution*, which he published in 1997 together with Liu Zaifu 劉再復. In Li’s view, humankind should pursue progress through sensible reforms instead of violent revolutions. In this regard, he certainly drew inspiration from the traditional Chinese ideas of harmony, middle way, and *du*. According to him, such positive notions could (and should) replace violent attempts to resolve national and social conflicts in contemporary societies.

Ethics and Morality

The reason why Li Zehou places such stress upon the clear distinction between ethics and morality lies in the fact that in general, people discussing them in everyday language as well as scholars and theoreticians treating them in academic writings still use the two terms interchangeably and synonymously, as evident from the following quotation:

There is no reason to make a distinction in meaning between “ethical” and “moral.” There is certainly no difference in meaning which could be attributed to their etymological roots. Sometimes some moral philosophers or “ethicists” distinguish them from each other, but not all philosophers do; and those who do distinguish them from each other do not all distinguish them in the same way ... It is recommended here that the words be considered as synonymous.

GRACE AND COHEN 1998, 4

In such discourses, both terms denote certain kinds of moral teachings or a summation of universally valid behavioral norms, and in this sense, both are seen as tools of orientation.

1 **Unfolding the Difference: Etymological Meanings and Later Connotations**

Such distortion of the difference between the two notions is in Western sources probably a result of the fact that the ancient Greek *ēthos* and the Latin *mos* had similar connotations, and this similarity has consequently led Cicero to translate the former from Greek into the latter in Latin.

On the other hand, in contemporary (especially practical) philosophy the two notions are usually strictly and clearly discriminated. However, there are many different definitions of what distinguishes them from one another (Fisher 2004, 397) and most of these are quite different from or even stand in a direct opposition to the distinction established by Li Zehou.

The field of ethics is usually understood as involving systematization, argumentation, and evaluation of the concepts of right and wrong behavior. Philosophers today usually divide ethical theories into particular subject areas

as meta-ethics, descriptive, normative, and applied ethics. The term “ethics” refers to a guide to behavior wider in scope than morality, a framework of criteria that individuals adopt as their own guide to life, as long as it is also seen as a proper guide for others (Gert and Gert 2017, 5). The term “morality” may also be used either in a descriptive or in the normative sense. In the first case, it refers to certain codes of conduct put forward by a society or a group or accepted by an individual for her own behavior. In the latter, it denotes a code of conduct that, given specified conditions, would be put forward by all rational persons (Gert and Gert 2017, 5).

Most often, morality is understood as something that refers to norms and systems of norms guiding human social behavior and possessing absolute validity, while ethics is seen as an academic discipline dealing with morality:

Ethics studies morality. Morality is a term used to cover those practices and activities that are considered importantly right and wrong; the rules that govern those activities; and the values that are embedded, fostered, or pursued by those activities and practices. The morality of a society is related to its mores, or the customs that a society or group accepts as being right and wrong, as well as those laws of a society that add legal prohibitions and sanctions to many activities considered to be immoral. Hence, ethics presupposes the existence of morality, as well as the existence of moral people who judge right from wrong and generally act in accordance with norms they accept and to which they and the rest of society hold others.

DE GEORGE 1999, 19

In such views, morality is a social—rather than individual—phenomenon based upon generally recognized and obligatory norms and values, while ethics is determined as a philosophical discipline studying and investigating human life practices through the lens of the conditions defining their morality. In other words, morality is commonly seen as consisting of particular classes of behavior-governing norms and “ethics” is the study of moral norms that includes their grounding and their justification (McGavin 2013, 495) or as the study of how it is most rational to behave (Gert and Gert 2017, 6). Peter Singer, a well-known (but also very controversial) representative of contemporary Western ethical discourses, has advocated a similar view:

The terms ethics and morality are closely related. We now often refer to ethical judgments or ethical principles where it once would have been more common to speak of moral judgments or moral principles. These applications are an extension of the meaning of ethics. Strictly speaking,

however, the term refers not to morality itself but to the field of study, or branch of inquiry, that has morality as its subject matter. In this sense, ethics is equivalent to moral philosophy.

SINGER 2017, 627

In some other similarly constructed classifications, morality is defined as practice and ethics as theory. In such discourses, morality can be molded by education, customs, and by patterns of behavior and expression prevailing in a certain society. In these views, morality is a practice of what “ought to be.” It is seen as an entirety of codes of conduct prevailing in a society and integrated by its individual members. Hence, moral norms are practical rules or strategies, governing at the same time each given member of human societies (Miller 2016, 64). As a theory of morality, ethics offers a theoretical examination of morality and is understood as a subarea of philosophy. It contains reflections and discussions on good life and morally proper actions. It systemizes morality, searches for its legitimizations, and develops criteria for its evaluation (Köberer 2014, 21–22). In such “standard views” (Gordon 2017, 3), morality is understood as the object of ethics, which, on the other hand, is the philosophical theory of morality and the systematic analysis of moral norms and values.

Often, morality is also defined as a special field in the ethical realm: in this view, ethics is the generic term for ethical and moral issues in the abovementioned sense, and morality a special part of ethics (e.g., Williams 2006, 5).

In the Western academia we also come across other, less dominant views, according to which “Morality is a cultural phenomenon. Each society has its morality. On the contrary, ethics aims to cross-cultural, universal morality” (Marina 2000, 321).

However, most contemporary Chinese scholars emphasize the difficulties linked to a search for a clear definition of the main differences between ethics and morality:

Ethics (*lunli* 倫理) and morality belong to the most fundamental concepts of the ethical studies (*lunlixue* 倫理學). Questions such as what is “ethics,” what is “morality,” and ultimately, about the nature of their mutual relation, belong to the central problems debated in ethical studies from the ancient until the present times.

倫理與道德是倫理學的兩個最基本概念。從古至今,關於什麼是“倫理”,什麼是“道德”,以及二者到底有著什麼樣的關係,一直就是倫理學界討論的主要話題之一。倫理與道德的關係十分緊密,以至於我們經常將二者混同,但是嚴格地講,倫理與道德是有著顯著區別的兩個概念。

ZOU YU 2004, 15

Here, Zou Yu applies the distinction between ethics in the sense of a set of moral concepts and axiological principles that guide human behavior (*lunli* 倫理) and other connotations of the term, which explicitly refer to ethics as an academic discipline or a field of study (*lunlixue* 倫理學). In contrast to the Indo-European terminologies, this distinction is relatively common and often applied in the Chinese discourses.¹

Some Chinese sources describe the terms ethics and morality either as synonyms or as two notions referring to the general and concrete levels of the same meaning, as for instance in the following citation:

According to the 5th edition of the Modern Chinese dictionary, the so-called ethics refers to all kinds of moral principles regulating the relations between people.

從一般意義上講，所謂倫理，是指人與人相處的各種道德準則（據《現代漢語詞典》第5版）。

YOU ZHENGLIN 2017, 108

In most cases, morality is understood as a collective social phenomenon:

From the viewpoint of ethics (as a science investigating the norms of human behavior), morality is defining the collective behavior of members of a certain group in accordance with ethical principles that are believed or accepted by this group.

從倫理學（即研究人類行為規範的一門學科）的角度來看，道德是某一群體依照所信奉的倫理原則制定的群體行為準則。

WU JIAN 2005, 1

Very often, ethics is also defined as a theory or science of morality:

¹ In Indo-European languages, including English, there is no differentiation between these two Chinese terms. Hence, the words *lunlixue* and *lunli* are both translated as “ethics,” which comprises both meanings of the two Chinese terms. This deficiency (or this lack of terminological precision) certainly increases the confusion prevailing in various different connotations and interpretations of the English term and might actually be an additional reason for the fact that Li Zehou attaches such a great importance to his particular distinction between ethics and morality.

Ethics is the science of superior morality; it is the method and the process that determines such morality. It is a science that can implement the basic approaches of morality.

倫理學是關於優良道德的科學，是關於優良道德的製定方法和製定過程以及實現途徑的科學。

WANG HAIMING 2002, 90

Similar to the dominant Western descriptions, Chinese scholars often define ethics as a science or a discourse that investigates moral principles:

Ethics is either seen as a discipline that explores the goodness, or as one that investigates moral laws or regulations.

倫理學或者被看做是研究善的，或者被看做是研究服從某種道德律法或規則的正當的行為。

LIAO SHENBAI 2009, 2

In the English translation of their article on ethics and morality, contemporary Chinese theoreticians Song Xiren and Cui Hui describe the relation between ethics and morality in a different, but somehow comparable way:

In simple terms, ethos is regarded as the reasonable relationship between men; while morality is thought of as norms, which the ethical order ought to have. As a way of governing man's actions in society, on the one hand morality shapes virtues of individuals and on the other hand establishes customs of a group. The sum total of ideas and norms which are popular and accepted in a society is the ideology of social morals. Thus, it can be seen that ethos implies an objective relationship and the moral principle of this relationship.

SONG AND CUI 2009, 212

Some Chinese authors regard the Chinese word ethics (*lunli* 倫理) as a Western concept, and morality (*daode* 道德) as a Chinese concept:

The contemporary meaning of “ethics” includes the characteristics of reason, science, and universal will as defined in the Western cultures, while the term “morality” includes Eastern nuances such as sensuality, humanism, the cultivation of men and so on.

當代“倫理”概念蘊含著西方文化的理性、科學、公共意志等屬性，“道德”概念蘊含著更多的東方文化的情性、人文、個人修養等色彩。

YAO XINYU 2006, 21

In Li's ethical system, the various above listed understandings of the difference between ethics and morality reopen the question of how these two discourses relate to each other in the framework of a moral theory. Nevertheless, before introducing Li's view on this implicational distinction, let me shortly present the etymological sources and semantic developments of these two notions in the history of Chinese language, because in this aspect, an attentive consideration of their Chinese meanings can contribute to a better understanding of Li's theory.

The modern Chinese word for ethics is *lunli* 倫理, a compound composed of the characters *lun* 倫 and *li* 理. The original meaning of the former² is linked to the semantic scope of class or category (see Wang Li et al. 2017, 36; Peng 1986, 430; Unger 2000, 61) and mostly refers to ordered or “normal” relations between people. It often appears in various Confucian classics in this sense.³ The character *li* 理 denotes a dynamic structure, a structural pattern, principle, or order.⁴ Hence, the compound *lunli* 倫理 designates a structural order (or an

2 The character *lun* 倫 is composed of the *phoneticum* *lun* 侖 and the *significum* *ren* 人. While it is widely known that the latter element means human beings, the former usually refers to order or regulations and can thus be—in combination with the latter—interpreted as human order.

3 See for instance: 欲潔其身，而亂大倫。(Wishing to maintain his personal purity, he allowed the confusion of important relations to other people) (*Lunyu* s.d., Wei zi: 7); 今居中國，去人倫，無君子，如之何其可也？(Now we live in the Middle Kingdom. It would be unthinkable to eliminate the relationships of people, and to have no order in society!) (*Mengzi* s.d., Gaozi xia: 30); 儼人必於其倫。(When comparing people with each other, we have to examine the relations they live in). (*Li ji* s.d., Dianli xia: 115).

4 While interpreting the notion *li* 理 to mean “structure” may still seem highly unusual, there are several good reasons for doing so. Although the term *li* has been mostly translated as principle or idea, such translations were products of misunderstandings that were rooted in deficient comprehension of the problems of cultural incommensurability. In the 17th century, the first translators of Chinese philosophy, i.e., the Christian missionaries were primarily confronted with the Neo-Confucian philosophy. These discourses were based upon a bipolar perception of the world, composed from something, which was called *qi* 氣 and organized in accordance with something called *li* 理. Hence, for the Western educated scholars, it was perfectly natural to see matter in the first, and idea in the second concept. However, as I have shown in my book *Traditional Chinese Philosophy and the Paradigm of Structure* (Rošker 2012), the concept *li* cannot be seen as idea or principle in a “Western” sense, but rather as structure or a structural pattern, which can, of course, belong to the sphere of abstractions or ideas, but also (as its etymological meaning suggests) to the realm of visible and tangible phenomena.

ordered network) of inter-human relations. This is the sense that it carries in the classical Confucian work *Li ji* 禮記 (*The Classic of Rites*):

All modulations of sound take their rise from the mind of man; and music connects us with ethics, i.e., the structure (*li* 理) of human relations (*lun* 倫).

凡音者，生於人心者也。樂者，通倫理者也。

Li ji s.d., Yue ji: 5

The compound *lunli* 理倫 became more commonly used during the Han Dynasty when it appeared in a wide variety of different Confucian sources, for instance, in Dong Zhongshu's 董仲舒 *Chunqiu fanlu* 春秋繁露. (*The Rich Dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals*), in which the author highlights the importance of the concordance between the laws of cosmos and those regulating the relationships between people:

We act in accordance with ethics to assist the laws of nature.

行有倫理，副天地也。

DONG ZHONGSHU s.d., Ren fu tian shu: 1

Here, we observe the holistic tendency that was typical for classical Chinese philosophy rooted in a presumption of a structural, complementary, and correlative connection between nature and society. This connection was highlighted in several other sources of the early Han Dynasty, as for instance, in the Huang-Lao Daoist work *Huai Nanzi* 淮南子:

The book “*Qin zu*” explores the eight ultimate directions and is the highest source of wisdom. Regarding the spheres above us, it explains the three lights (of the sun, moon, and stars); concerning the spheres below, it teaches how to harmonize water and earth. It orders the ways of past and present, and defines the ethical order.

《泰族》者，橫八極，致高乘，上明三光，下和水土，經古今之道，治倫理之序。

Huai Nanzi s.d., Yaolüe: 20

Already at the very beginning of the Han Dynasty rule, ethical regulations were seen as an important content of politics and education, which is clearly documented in Jia Yi's 賈誼 *Xin shu* (*New Writings*):

Officials who were in charge with the implementation of morality were responsible for maintaining the social order of four classes and they taught people the ethics of rites and justice.

祧師，典春以掌國之眾庶四民之序，以禮義倫理教訓人民。

JIA YI s.d., Vol. 5, Fu zuo: 8

In the same work, Jia Yi also warns against the severe consequences of not considering such regulations:

Shang Yang has violated rituality and justice (morality) and he abandoned ethics. He focused solely upon his own ambitions. He continued to act like this for two years, and the customs of the state Qin were increasingly declining.

商君違禮義，棄倫理，并心於進取，行之二歲，秦俗日敗。

JIA YI s.d., Vol. 3, Shi bian: 3

In the same period, ethics was already seen as an important and essential characteristic of human beings, namely as the crucial feature that distinguishes them from animals:

People who do not live in accordance with the hierarchical order are like wild animals; they live in chaos and don't know about ethics.

無上下之序者，禽獸之性，則亂不知倫理。

WANG CHONG s.d., Shu xu: 49

In modern Chinese, the Western concept of morality has mostly been translated using the term *daode* 道德. This compound comprises two characters that were defined in the oldest etymological Chinese dictionary *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 (*Interpreting Texts and Explaining Characters*) in the following way:

- a) Dao: the way on which one walks 道: 所行道也. (Xu Shen s.d.)
- b) De: to rise, to ascend, to go up, or to offer as a tribute 德: 升也. (ibid.)

In the historical development of the classical Chinese language, both terms obtained various additional semantic connotations.

Besides implying a path, a road, or a journey, *dao* was often used to express a method, a principle, but also law or reason. All these connotations referred to a certain way in which something could be done or achieved. In Daoism, it also

represented the origin of all things. In other contexts, it could mean to speak or to formulate something, to take a course of action, to lead or to flow smoothly. Its original meaning was probably also tightly connected to the connotation of rites that were paid to the spirits of roads before attending a journey.

The term *de*, on the other hand, could mean kindness, good deeds, reward, or good fortune, but its central and most important meaning was linked to the concept of moral virtues, to the potential for being virtuous, or to the method of virtuous behavior. Both terms appeared together in various early classical texts, such as the Confucian *Analects* or in the main works of philosophical Daoism, but in the pre-Qin period, they were not applied to the current meaning of morality.⁵ Rather, the compound expressed the path of virtue,⁶ the characteristics of the *dao*,⁷ or acting in accordance with one's own humanness.⁸ In all such context, the terms *dao* and *de* were seen as conveying similar or related contents that were often used in a mutually complementary way, without, however, representing a compound word with a unified meaning. In the chapter *Dao de shuo* 道德說 of his *Xin shu* 新書 (*New Writings*), Jia Yi connected the two terms by comparing *dao* to the axiological system underlying our aesthetic judgments of a jade stone, and *de* to the method of making such judgments (Jia Yi s.d., *Dao de shuo*: 1).

From the late Qing Dynasty on, *daode* was increasingly expressed by the English term "morality." Since this connotation was new, complex, and very different from the traditional meanings that were associated with the two characters, such translation often led to confusions:

By the end of the Qing Dynasty and during the early republican period, the traditional Chinese word "*daode*" was seriously alienated; its new meaning could not match its traditional connotations. This was probably directly connected to the fact that at the time, an excessive amount of foreign works on ethics was introduced into China, which led to

5 Both characters already appeared together in the title of Laozi's famous *Daode jing* 道德經 (The Book of the Way and of Virtue), without representing as a compound word. In this title, they have to be understood as two independent terms, meaning the Way and the virtue, respectively. In the entire text of this book, which comprises over 5,000 characters, they never appeared together.

6 See for instance *Li ji* s.d., Qu Li: 8, Wang Zhi: 38; *Xunzi* s.d., Quan xue: 12, Ru xiao: 27, Wang ba: 18; *Ban Gu* s.d., Li Yue: 9, etc.

7 See for instance *Zhuangzi* s.d., Wai pian, Pian mu: 1, 2, Ma ti: 2, Tian Dao: 2, 4, Shan mu: 1, 6, etc.

8 See for instance *Wenzi* s.d., Shang li: 5.

confusions in the translation process ... Because of this, the traditional Chinese interpretation of “morality” became lost in present debates on moral theories. This is also the reason for the disorder regarding the prevailing moral principles in contemporary Chinese reality.

中國傳統中的“道德”一詞，在清末民初這段時間中出現了嚴重異化，古今“道德”的文義出現了對不上號的問題，這，大概與該時期大量引入外國的倫理學著作和思想的時候，在翻譯上所出現的概念困惑情況有直接的關係 ... 這就是說，現在中國絕大部分討論中國道德的理論之所以大量喪失了中國傳統“道德”的正解，中國現實中的道德觀之所以出現混亂現象，實在是新文化運動以來造成的中國文化傳統出現斷裂的後遺症。

QIAN JUN 2014, 5

This confusion was omnipresent in the manifold different understandings and usages of both terms in question, i.e. *daode*, as well as *lunli*. Just as most other modern philosophical terms, the new meanings of the two notions came to China through Japanese translations. In 1881 Inoue Tetsujirō (1855–1944) borrowed the Chinese term *lunli* to translate “ethics” as *rinrigaku* 倫理學, which literally means “ethical teachings.” Later the word “morality” was given the Japanese translation *dōtoku* 道德. (Chen 2009, 195). Cai Yuanpei, the author of one of the first widely influential modern books on the history of Chinese ethics,⁹ has adopted the most common Western interpretations of the two terms, defining *lunlixue* 倫理學 (ethics) as a scientific discipline, which investigates ethical principles. In his view, it was the theory of morality (*daode* 道德), while the cultivation of the Self (*xiu shen* 修身) rather represented its practical aspects (Cai Yuanpei 2007, 1).

9 Cai's book, *The History of Chinese Ethics* 中國倫理學史 was published in 1910, five years after Liu Shipei's first edition of his *Textbook on Ethics* 倫理教科書. Cai Yuanpei largely agreed with Liu. They both adopted the main features of Western ethics, although Liu's book had more of a didactic nature, whereas Cai was more focused upon methods of research, and on adapting traditional culture to what he had understood of other countries from his reading of Japanese sources (Chen 2009, 205).

In this context, it is interesting to note that Cai always rendered the term ethics (in the noun form) as *lunlixue* 倫理學 (literary: ethical teachings, or the science of ethics). The term *lunli* 倫理 as such was never used as a noun, but always in the adjective form, for instance as “ethical sections” (*lunlixue ketiao* 倫理之科條, Cai Yuanpei 2007, 1), or “ethical thought” (*lunli sixiang* 倫理思想, *ibid.*, 3), etc.

2 Li Zehou's Distinction

Against this background, it is even easier to understand how important it was for Li Zehou to clarify his own understanding of these two notions that are crucial for his ethical theory.

The distinction Li makes between ethics and morality not only differs from all abovementioned definitions but also from most well-established and authoritative contemporary Western interpretations that created various advancements and added different innovative approaches to such discussions. At a first glance, Li's distinction between ethics and morality seems to be quite similar to Hegel's differentiation between *Moralität* and *Sittlichkeit*, which underlies the theory of his *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*. However, Li has repeatedly denied the existence of any notable Hegelian influences in his philosophy (see for instance Li Zehou 2016, 44, 76, 133). In a speech delivered at a conference organized in order to celebrate the 200th jubilee of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, he even proposed an anti-Hegelian slogan, "Kant yes, Hegel no" (*Yao Kangde, bu yao Heigeer* 要康德, 不要黑格爾), and he often criticized the abovementioned distinction for being an integral part of Hegel's deterministic thought which he labelled "objective idealism," and denounced it for annihilating the problem of human subjectivity (Gu Xin 1996, 206).

In this context, I should also mention Jürgen Habermas, who believed that in contrast to Kant, Hegel had a "sharper view" of the "phenomena of successful coexistence" (Habermas 2019, 42ff), because for him the reconciling force of state organizational power was the social bond that is supposed to hold together individuals, who are becoming increasingly isolated from the unfolding capitalist dynamics. In addition, Habermas aimed to connect and upgrade the ethical and moral aspects of the critical theory with those of American pragmatism, launching another crucial difference between the two notions. As is well known, Habermas proceeded from an attempt to reformulate Kant's ethics by grounding moral norms in communication and he denoted this new ethical paradigm with the term "discourse ethics" (Habermas 1989, 38). For him, ethics has to do with the pursuit of one's own happiness or well-being and private lifestyle, that is, how we should live to make good lives for ourselves, while morality has to do with other people's interests and deontological constraints. (Gordon 2017, 3)

Li criticized Habermas, pointing out that in his "discourse ethics," the ethical problems remain embedded in the particular biographical context and do not claim universal validity. In this framework, they are limited to questions about designing one's own life against the background of the respective cultural community. In this context, Habermas also discusses discourses of practical

morality, which in his view require the break with all self-evident qualities of the accustomed concrete morality as well as the distancing from those life contexts with which one's own identity is inseparably connected (Habermas 1991, 113).¹⁰ Thus, Habermas believes that we make moral use of practical reason when we ask what is equally good for everyone; an ethical use, when we ask what is good for me or for us (Habermas 1991a, 149).

Li pointed out that such approaches lacked an important element of the Marxist theory, namely that of the material basis, which profoundly influences the ethical conditions of societies:

Globalization can be developed in a more rational way. It can adapt to different cultures and religions. It can embrace differences and remain based upon consensus, maintaining the tension between them. In this way, the relation between the two is no longer merely a passive opposition, for social existence furnishes the consensus with a very strong material basis. In my view, Habermas lacks this basis; he only talks about negotiations and rational discussions. These are purely academic ideals impossible to realize without this material basis.

全球化可以向更加合理的方向發展，並且適應不同的文化和宗教。也就是說可以既有差異又有共識，保持兩者之間有張力，並不是消極地對立，社會存在從而給共識以一個非常強大的物質基礎。我覺得哈貝馬斯就是沒有這個基礎，他就單單講協商，講商談理性，那隻是書齋理想，沒有這個物質基礎就不可能。

LI ZEHOU AND TONG SHIJUN 2012, 169

According to Li, most of the contemporary and classical theories miss a decisive point in their attempts to define ethics and morality. Hence, he repeatedly explained his own view on the distinction between ethics and morality, which differs from all of the abovementioned interpretations:

I am strictly and clearly differentiating between ethics and morality. Ethics is external, it is a system or an order consisting of concrete ideas: therefore, it is relative and can be changed in accordance with different periods of time. Although some aspects are carried on, the concrete

10 Habermas's influence is visible in numerous contemporary Chinese ethical theories. Views that are similar to his "discourse ethics" are advocated in many sources, e.g., in Ren Ping's essay on the difference between morality and ethics, in which the author also highlights that "morality and ethics form a double sequence in interactions between moral subjects" (道德與倫理都是道德主體間交往活動的雙重序列) (Ren 1989, 91).

contents, like for instance the concept of “a loyal ruler” or of “respecting the festivals” can differ in different situations. “Morality,” on the other hand, is internal. It represents human psychological formations. In my view, it is the categorical imperative of which Kant spoke. In fact, it is a mental form. In other words: people are cultured by ethics, by different systems and orders, but on the other hand, they all possess psychological formations that have an absolute nature. From the viewpoint of history, they are products of practice, and in individuals, they appear through education. They are cultivated in humans through education in a broadest sense, i.e., through guidance, refinement, and influences. When we teach children from the earliest age not to grab other people’s candies, not to lie or insult other persons and so on, we are cultivating their morality.

我把倫理（ethics）和道德（moral）做一種較嚴格的明確區分。倫理是外在的，制度、秩序或者說具體的觀念，因此是相對的，不同時代有不同的變化。雖然會有繼承的一面，但是有變化的，比如說“忠君”、“守節”的含義都有不同。內在的是“道德”，是人類的心理結構，我認為就是康德講的絕對命令。它實際上是一種心理形式。也就是說，即倫理、制度、秩序所培養出來的人們所具有的心理結構是絕對性的。從歷史來講是通過實踐，從個體來講就是經過教育。廣義的教育即對人從小就有的教導、培養、影響，等等，比如從小教小孩子不要搶別人的糖果，不講謊話，不要欺辱別人，等等，這培養的就是道德。

ibid., 172

Here,—once again—it becomes obvious that Li differs from Kant in emphasizing that no human capacities are a priori or innate, but rather belong to humans as a result of history and education. For Li, ethics is a system established in accordance with external conceptions of good and evil. It is also a system that implements and reproduces these external axiological conceptions in individuals and societies. This means that ethics, which is relative in the sense that it is always based upon concrete historical experiences, continuously constructs, shapes, and sediments into the forms and structures of human mind elements of the ethical substance,¹¹ which actually belong to the absolute ethics. In this way, the absolute is constructed through and by the relative. In other words, this is the transformation of the empirical into the transcendental. In this process, principles of reason arise from ritual. Morality, on the other hand,

11 In Li's view, “the substance of ethics” (*lunli bentī* 倫理本體) manifests itself as the free will. It is a part of the “cultural-psychological formation” (*wenhua xinli jiegou* 文化心理結構) in the human mind.

consists of the formal structures of internal psychology, in which emotions are determined by principles of reason.¹² For Li, ethics is represented by external institutions, standards, norms, orders and customs, while morality is linked to those psychological characteristics and behaviors that accord with and fulfill the institutions, orders, norms, and laws.

In this sense, Li's understanding differs from most other traditional and modern philosophical approaches. He points out that even though Hegel, for instance, also differentiated between ethics and morality, he failed to see the importance of morality as the extremely specific forms of the individual's mental structures; instead, he saw it as a set of abstract universal principles (Li, Zehou 2016, 1108). In Li's view, however, ethics and morality are both products of history, which is circumstantial, for it develops in accord with the particular nature of specific periods, cultures, and societies. Hence, all ethics and moralities are equally determined by concrete historical circumstances. But history is also accumulative.¹³ Its progressive nature means that advancements of material life are always followed by advancements in terms of ethics and morality. In this context, Li highlights that in his view, the sedimentation of particular shared ideas of good and evil as well as matching emotions occurs through the history and socialization of human beings. In this way, people progressively come to possess joint ethical criteria and moral standards (*ibid.*, 1135). These three essential levels of history, i.e., its circumstantial, progressive, and accumulative aspects, are linked to the relative nature of ethics. However, Li Zehou strongly opposes the promotion of this relativity to a kind of sanctified or generally valid truth. Hence, he clearly and repeatedly rejected the idea of ethical relativism, and even more rigorously criticized situationism.

In Li's view, most contemporary philosophers and theoreticians of ethics do not fully understand the importance of such differentiations:

Other later scholars have similarly made this distinction, but their understandings also differ fundamentally from my own. Sandel's many examples do not clearly distinguish the ethics of political action, trials,

12 Li further explains this relation in the following way: "Ritual regulations are based in circumstances and concrete situations, which are connected with desires and emotions, and then ritual regulations go on to produce reason. Yet it is this reason and not emotion that governs an individual's moral action. In terms of the community, ritual (ethics) comes from emotionality (as shared circumstance), whereas for the individual reason governs emotions" (Li, Zehou 2016, 1076).

13 This accumulative and simultaneously progressive nature of historical development is also the reason why Li rejects ethical relativism: "Relativism indeed recognizes the variability of conceptions of good and evil based on society, but does not adequately take into account the importance of the accumulative nature of history" (Li, Zehou 2016, 1120).

and policies, which are related to institutions, from the morals of individual behavior and psychology. Of course, absolute distinction between them is challenging but also extremely necessary. Conflating political and individual action makes clarifying ethical and moral issues very difficult.

ibid., 1108

Hence, Li repeatedly exposes that the crucial distinction between the two notions can be found in the external and internal levels of human consciousness. While the former pertain to ethics, the latter define human morality. The actual social content of ethics changes with time, but morality, which manifests itself in moral formations, embedded in emotio-rational structure of human mind, are absolute. Hence, ethics refers to common social procedures, institutions, laws and regulations; it consists of external social norms and requirements on the person's actions. Morality, on the other hand, is a unique human capacity, which manifests itself in human mental formations and constitutes an extremely important and unique value for human existence and its continuation, surpassing the laws of causality, and going beyond space and time.

The internal psychological formations that constitute morality contain human rational capacities of free will, which represent the driving force behind our actions. On the other hand, it also includes human feelings, which function as an auxiliary force. Li often highlights the importance of this auxiliary power. Hence, these psychological formations include both rational capacities and sensuality, but in their external or social dimensions, their concrete contents belong to two different types of morality, for Li also distinguishes between traditional religious and modern social morality. This distinction is important for the understanding of his ethical system. Therefore, we will introduce his ethical theory of the two kinds of morality (*liang de lun* 兩德論) in greater detail in the fourth section of this chapter. But before introducing this distinction, we shall take a closer look at the very development of ethics and morality.

3 Historical and Developmental Foundations: From *Qing* 情 as Collective Emotionality to *Qing* 情 as Individual Emotion

As we can see from the graphical scheme of Li Zehou's ethical system,¹⁴ he outlined the developmental line of ethics and morality by an arrangement of the so-called four arrows (Li, Zehou 2016, 1109), which lead from collective human condition or shared emotionality through rituality and reason to

14 See Li Zehou's *General Scheme of Ethics* in the appendix.

individual emotions in the following order: *Qing* (collective emotionality) → Ritual Regulations ↔ Reason → *Qing* (individual emotion).

In the original Chinese version of this schema, the developmental line begins and ends with the same character, namely *qing* 情, which is usually translated as “emotion.” At first sight, it might appear a bit strange that a development, which begins with a certain notion, leads toward a final stage designated by the same notion. However, we must not forget that in Chinese, this character has various different connotations. Because of the semantic complexity of the term *qing*, Li argues that it might be better not to translate it at all, but rather just apply the original Chinese term in English:

I hope that in several decades, or even longer, the terms “*qing*” and “*du*,” which occupy a very important position in my Chinese vocabulary—similar to “*dao*,” “*yin-yang*,” etc., will become a common part of English terminology. It is very difficult to find a suitable English translation for such words. The term “*qing*,” for instance, can not be equated to mean emotion, feeling, affection, etc.

我希望幾十年或更長時間以後，“情” (*qing*) 與 “度” (*du*) 這兩個在我的學中占有重要位置的中文詞匯，能與 “道” (*dao*)， “陰陽” (*yin-yang*) 等英譯一樣，成為西文的通用詞匯。因為這些詞都很難找到可以恰當對應的西語譯名。例如，“情”就很難等同於 emotion, feeling, affection, passion 等等。

LI ZEHOU 2018, 1

The term *qing* 情 does not only refer to emotions (*qinggan* 情感), but also to situations (*qingkuang* 情況), (different) contexts or atmospheres (*qingjing* 情境), and facts (*qingshi* 情實). Li explains the difference between these different connotations of the same character by pointing out that even though the first *qing* (here translated as “emotionality”) includes human emotions and desires, it is not limited to them, but rather refers more broadly to the circumstances (*qingjing* 情境) of the existence of human communities, which are interrelated with shared human emotions and desires. The latter usage of the term *qing* 情 in this model means “emotion” and refers to individual feelings and desires. We could also say (see D'Ambrosio 2016, 728) that in such view, emotions are developed and cultivated broadly in society and narrowly in the individual's psychological structures. Even though Li sometimes suggests that the term *qing* should not be translated but incorporated into the English terminology (similar to the categories *dao* 道 or *yinyang* 陰陽), it still makes sense to translate it with the terms “emotionality” (in the sense of collective responsiveness

to concrete circumstances or situations) and “emotion” (in the sense of individual feelings), respectively. Both abovementioned implications of the term can also be found in Western discourses (see Hatzimoysis 2009, 215).

As we can clearly see from the above schema, Li Zehou sees the origin of the process, in which humans developed ethics and morality, in the concept *qing* 情, which appears in this context as the shared human emotionality, generated by the collective situation determining the existence of human beings.¹⁵ Through long-lasting historical developments, these conditions were increasingly modified and ordered through rituality in its broadest meaning of customs, norms, orders, regulations and laws. In this schema, rituals are condensed patterns of productive and operative human interaction. These first two stages of human evolvment (i.e., collective emotionality and ritual) belong to ethics. Ethical principles are then sustained, reproduced, and developed through education (or, in its widest sense, through socialization) of individuals, shaping their reason (which consists of the free will and ideas or concepts), and their individual emotions that are reflected in their individual decisions and behavioral patterns. The last two stages in this developmental scheme, namely reason and emotion, belong to morality.

The four arrows that are placed between the four items of this model represent their relationships. The first arrow moves from *qing* (collective emotionality and emotional responsiveness to situations or concrete circumstances) to ritual regulations, the second and the third from ritual to reason and back, respectively. Although ritual generates reason, reason simultaneously also influences rites.¹⁶ The fourth arrow pointing from reason to *qing* (in the sense of individual emotions) principally denotes the governance of emotions

15 Paul D'Ambrosio points out (2016, 727) that this is another way of stating that emotions are the substance (*qing bentu* 情本體) of morality.

16 Li emphasizes the progressive nature of this bidirectional arrow, pointing out “Once ritual has entered reason’s conceptual realm of knowledge, reason itself becomes relatively independent. Because people’s lives are in a constant state of change, their thought and conduct have aspects of obeying and identifying with ritual as well as aspects of rejecting, challenging, and opposing ritual. This includes reinterpreting, revising, and altering rituals. This dynamic quality of concepts can be quite pronounced. New concepts both have their origin in actual human life as well as their own logic of conceptual transformation and development. They are entirely able to break through the established norms or requirements of rituals. Therefore, the move from rituals to reason does not involve any sort of mechanistic or deterministic outlook. Ideas can precede the arrival of new order, new institutions, or new norms (that is, new “rituals”), and can contribute to the destruction or change of old ones.

In this way the relationship between rituals and reason is also bidirectional. This is the significance of the fourth arrow, which moves in the opposite direction between the two, from reason to ritual” (Li Zehou 2016, 1110).

by reason as a result of the cultivation of will through solidification of reason. Here reason controls and cultivates emotions of concrete individuals through their identification with concepts of good and evil, thereby controlling behavior. Because of this, the “free will” of “human capacity” is simply the capacity to consciously act according to one’s conceptions of good and evil. As already mentioned, the free will is the form, while the ideas of good and evil constitute the content of reason:

What needs to be made clear here is that conceptions of good and evil are not the “free will” of the solidification of reason but rather the concrete rational ideas that are the content of this “free will.” Ritual, which originated through practices of shamanism, includes formal aspects of the emotio-rational structure in willpower while also possessing the content of concrete notions of good and evil. Therefore “reason” here has two major connotations: the solidification of reason (will) and the construction of reason (knowledge, as conceptions of good and evil). The movement from ritual to reason cultivates these two aspects of individual reason.

LI, ZEHOU 2016, 1110

Even though the notions of “good” and “evil” are hence relative and changeable in particular culturally determined situations, they also include an absolute criterion that is established in reference to social existence and the survival of humankind. Hence, developing instincts of love and hate to emotional powers and implementing rational directives is the process of moral cultivation of humanness (*ibid.*, 1111). In this context, developing and cultivating “good” instincts and eliminating, guiding, and blocking the “evil” ones usually appear through appropriate rational recognition of good and evil. Here, the condensation of reason in the form of the free will serves to control and decrease “improper” basic instincts. In this context, Li Zehou also highlights the importance of moral emotions. The aforementioned basic conceptions of good and evil, for instance, together with their rational understanding, pervade all kinds of emotions. The relationships between each of these emotions and rational psychological elements are differently structured, so their particular forms can be tremendously multifaceted and complex. But the general process model leading from ritual (represented by external norms, guidance, punishments) to reason (manifesting itself in the conceptions of good and evil or right and wrong, in rational understanding and the function of free will as the dominant power of the condensed rational form) and emotions, is relatively easy to see and to comprehend. Li explains this process with the help of the example

from Chinese culture and describes the traditional Chinese way of cultivating emotions:

In ancient China the terms *li* 禮 (ritual) and *yue* 樂 (music) were spoken of together. Ritual came from shamanistic ceremonies, taboos, totems, and so on, which included music and involved hierarchical distinctions that then become the patterns for rational knowledge (conceptions of good and evil and of right and wrong). However, through music and ceremonies (*yi* 儀) this also directly shapes emotions that despite their natural physiological basis are distinctly human.

ibid., 1113

As we have seen, *qing* in the sense of collective emotionality or responsiveness to concrete situations is the developmental foundation of ritual, which generates, but is at the same time also influenced by reason, and reason dominates and controls *qing* in the sense of individual emotions. However, even though reason thus governs and regulates emotions, the latter also play a considerable auxiliary role in moral behavior. This integration of reason and emotion is a very important element in Li's moral philosophy. It manifests itself in a psychological formation, which he called the emotio-rational structure (*qingli jiegou* 情理結構) of human mind.

In this model of development, we can—once again—clearly see how much importance Li Zehou attaches to history and education. Ritual regulations are produced through the historical living existence of *qing* (collective emotionality and shared situations) and instilled into individuals as reason (concepts of good and evil) through education. In this process, norms and ethical systems both develop and are gradually condensed into reason in accordance with particular concrete stages of social development under the corresponding socio-historical conditions. Through the progression of such condensation of reason (*lixing ningju* 理性凝聚), free will controls and dominates individual behavior and instinctual desires. This stage is followed by the melting of reason (*lixing ronghua* 理性融化) into emotion, in which order, rules, and forms permeate and interweave into individual sensation.

On the individual level, this means that norms are useful for creating harmony in interpersonal relationships given particular social, political, and economic circumstances. When individuals internalize social norms, they identify with them both emotionally and rationally, and then act accordingly.

Hence, in the course of such development, ethical norms are abstracted and rationalized into moral systems.

As we have seen above, the idea of the condensation of reason, which is a result of the continuous accumulation of experience, plays a vital and instrumental role in this development. On the one hand, Li conceived it as a “true implication of Kant’s first (“universal laws”) and third (“free will”) principles” (Li Zehou, 2016, 1107).¹⁷ In addition, Li takes this idea to explain the constitution of his own supposition that “the empirical is being transformed into the transcendental” (*jingyan bian xianyan* 經驗變先驗). In this way, he aims to show why human psychological formations that are often understood as being “innate” or “transcendental” by individuals, are actually a product of the dynamic evolvement of human experience and practice.

While Kant believes that free will also belongs to a-priori reason, Li believes that it is formed through experience. The same applies to reason, which also comes from experience, and is formed through the long history of humankind, in which it was slowly accumulated in sedimentation and condensed. Individual human emotions and psychological structures of thought are products of human cultures. Although all these formations appear a-priori for the individual, they can only be understood from the perspective of the entire humankind. As soon as we consider this dimension of human evolvement, it becomes clear that human moral psychology as we know it is completed through the sedimentation of experience.

Li coins the term “condensation of reason” in order to emphasize the control and domination of reason over the individual emotions, desires, and inclinations. It begins to form during the earliest stages of human development, as can be observed both in the beginning of human evolution and in the developmental process of small children. In such beginnings of evolvement, the free will as the most distinctive moral capacity of human beings is shaped through external pressures, limitations, and restrictions, as well as through the learning of particular ethical procedures and the following of certain norms. All these elements gradually lead to the shaping of internal moral consciousness, which includes concepts and emotions.

In other words, we can also say that through ethics (which consists of external norms, requirements, institutions, and regulations) we come to morality (that includes free will and other internal psychological formations). These

17 In this context, Li explains that “Kant’s appreciation of the average person’s ability to act in accordance with morals refers to this psychological ‘legislation’ and the form of its psychological structures, and not to the concrete content of human culture and society” (Li, Zehou 2016, 1107).

capacities that human beings possess, which manifest themselves in their humanness (*ren xing* 人性) always move from experience to the a-priori, from social traditions and customs (with the help of socialization and education) to mentalities.

4 Two Kinds of Morality

As mentioned in the section on the difference between ethics and morality, Li also differentiates between two kinds of morality. In his theory, he draws a clear demarcation line between religious morality (*zongjiaoxing daode* 宗教性道德)—associated with subjective emotions, values, and beliefs—and social morality (*shehuixing daode* 社會性道德), which is linked to justice, equality, reason, independence, and human rights. In this schema, modern social morality and public virtue are distinguished from religious morality and private virtue. For Li, the former is primary, and he often emphasizes that “religious morality stems from social morality” (Li Zehou 2016b, 35). In several works, and particularly in his paper entitled “*Liang zhong daode lun*” 兩種道德論 (“Theory of the Two Kinds of Morality”), he explains the distinction between these two kinds of morality in great detail (see Li Zehou 2016b, 29–57).

Religious morality pertains to the religious nature of private virtues or private religious morality (*zongjiaoxing side* 宗教性私德) and is imbedded in individual values that originate from subjective feelings and develop through inherent cultivation and beliefs. Social morality, on the other hand, is rooted in public social virtues (*shehuixing gongde* 社會性公德) that are adopted as products of external laws, ethical codes, regulations, and orders¹⁸ (Li Zehou 2008a, 6). Here, it should be mentioned that Li also distinguishes between two kinds of ethics, which stand in an analogous relation with the two kinds of morality. He points out that this differentiation is particularly important in the present times. First, it appears as a part of political philosophy, in which it mainly deals with various problems of (human) rights, justice, and the structure of social power. Second, it also often occurs in the framework of religious philosophy in which it is mainly connected to questions regarding the concept of goodness (Li Zehou 2007a, 5). However, the distinction between the two kinds of morality is more important, for it has a paradigmatic rather than merely a discursive nature.

18 Sometimes he also identifies traditional religious morality to the traditional Chinese concept of “inner sage” (內聖 *nei sheng*) and the modern social morality with its equivalent, the “external ruler” (外王 *wai wang*) (Li Zehou 2018, 5).

As we have seen, morality is different from ethics (or legislation), which enforces restrictions upon the individual from outside. In Li's system, morality manifests itself in internal control, which enables a person's reasoning to suppress and to overcome her individual desires, selfish interests, inclinations and instincts, and leads her to act in accordance with social norms.¹⁹ Li sees this rational guidance and control as a specific human ability, which came to life through what he called "condensation" or "solidification of reason" (Li Zehou 2016b, 30). Thus, morality always refers to individual psychological forms. In Li's ethical system, however, these forms are additionally subdivided into an internal and an external realm. While the former includes mental forms of reason (i.e., concepts, ideas, free will) and emotions, the external dimension consists of two kinds of morality in question. These two axiological categories are thus embedded into the external realm of the inner individual moral world, which belongs to cultural-historical formations and is therefore historically shaped and socially determined.

In principle, these two kinds of morality are "often intermingled and difficult to separate" (Li Zehou 2016b, 34). In traditional cultures, there was no clear distinction between them. A strong delineation between the two moral systems was established relatively recently, namely, not before the age of Enlightenment. Hence, the demarcation line between religious and social morality is actually a product of modernity. Therefore, Li often denotes the first kind as "traditional religious morality" (*chuantong zongjiaoxing daode* 傳統宗教性道德) and the second one as "modern social morality" (*xiandai shehuixing daode* 現代社會性道德).

As already mentioned, Li emphasizes that the fundamental axiological basis of modern societies must rest on social morality, which is rooted in

19 Regarding this division, some readers might wonder why Li feels the need to complement this distinction with the one between the "inner" (private) and the "outer" (communal) form of morality, and how these two distinctions are structurally related to each other. Considering the fact that Li distinguishes between ethics as a set of external principles, and morality as a range of internal ones, it might remain unclear why the "outer" aspect of morality is not seen as a part of "ethics," i.e. as something inherently tied up with intersubjectivity and social relations. However, if we take a look at Li's Overview Scheme of Ethics (see appendix) we can see that the main dividing line separates external (social) regulations from internal principles. The former is called ethics, and the latter morality. Morality is hence something belonging exclusively to the human mind, something that is similar to Kant's transcendental forms. This internal part, however, i.e. the forms inherent to the human mind, are once more subdivided into forms that only regard the most intimate issues of the individual consciousness on the one hand, and those which pertain to her relations with other people. Ethics, in other words, is something that should be (at least in theory) accepted by all people in a community or society, whereas the "outer" part of morality reflects the manner in which an individual experiences and understands her relations with other people and the world.

public reason and therefore of primary nature. This also concretely and fundamentally means that we must not harm individual rights. In spite of his high evaluation of traditional Chinese social models that were based on relationalism (*guanxizhuyi* 關係主義) and reciprocity of humaneness, Li emphasizes that in modern ages, individual existence is the groundwork of the existence of society as a whole. Hence, individual rights cannot be invaded. In other words, the idea of “the priority of the social over the religious morality” is the foundation of modern life.²⁰ In this context, he highlights the importance of a modern legal system and a properly determinable concept of justice.

On the other hand, religious morality serves in this framework only as a regulative principle. Therefore, public education must also be based on modern social morality. In such a system, individuals can still freely decide on their beliefs and their private virtues. They are still free to choose their private values and beliefs and to follow their own religious morality, which is a part of human emotion-based substance.

Therefore, Li firmly believes in the significance of such a complementary role of religious morality and private virtues. He argues that in its function as “regulative principle,” religious morality is still very important, for it can fill up the axiological and emotional vacuum, which dominates the alienated contemporary societies. Besides, it offers people a way to harmonize with each other. Li claims that private virtues can “alleviate the emotional vapidness and coldness of human relationships brought by mechanistic public reason, formal justice, the market economy, fair trade, and the atomic individual” (Li, Zehou 2016, 1127). However, he repeatedly emphasizes that faith and emotion contained and constituted in religious morality can merely function as regulative and properly constitutive principles. This means that they are necessarily unable to determine or even replace modern social morality and public reason on which it is grounded. Hence, the proper constitution of religious morality is of great value for a society of true humaneness, provided that it cannot harm or deviate from the principles of social morality, for these principles have an absolute priority.

In such a correlative scheme, in which the two kinds of morality complement one another, the model of human relations is not reduced to a static and fixed system of immovable rules but rather functions as a vibrant inter-human

20 Li acknowledges that in spite of the problematic dimensions inherent to rational principles, these principles are still to be considered as great contributions of European Enlightenment. The fact that these ideals continue to be carried forward and expanded upon stems from typical trends and patterns of our modern life. Therefore, it is difficult to resist their omnipresent influence.

network that is able to diminish the social gap between rich and poor, surpassing the static model of stagnant social classes.

Li also relates the two kinds of morality to the traditional Chinese model of “inner sage and external ruler” (*neisheng waiwang* 內聖外王). In such view, the “inner sage” symbolizes and incorporates religious morality. According to Li, this notion can assist people—through philosophy, religion, art, and literature—in their search for meaning and the spiritual realms of life. The “external ruler,” on the other hand, stands for public virtues and symbolizes social morality.²¹ This concept is important as a foundation of a reasonable, just, and democratic political system. Li tries to develop this traditional binary category by upholding a “new way of the inner sage and external ruler” (Li, Zehou 2016, 1137). In Chinese tradition there was always an exaggeratedly intense focus on individual cultivation of private values. Hence, the “inner sagemess” could never transform itself or advance straight into “outer rule.” However, the current post-modern, globalized world is governed by instrumental rationality, and this “external ruler” should be supplemented by the “internal sage,” i.e., the ancient Chinese model of self-cultivation (Rošker 2019, 158). In this context, the traditional religious morality could be revived in order to supplement the domination of global reason, but would at the same time not be allowed (as it was the case in traditional China) to become a dominant model of “ruling by virtue” (*yi de zhi guo* 以德治國).

In this context, it is important to note that according to Li Zehou, religious morality of traditional China originated from the shamanistic ceremonies of the clan-based societies of the Neolithic era. These ceremonies were based in the so-called ritual ethics and shaped the traditional Chinese codes of conduct and modes of life over thousands of years. Li highlights that in ancient, traditional, and premodern China, people were convinced and truly believed that “ritual ethics” had a “universal nature, which surpasses time and space”; hence, this ritually determined system of ceremonial codes became the “religious morality” of the Chinese people (Li Zehou 2016b, 35). In the human mind these ritualized patterns contained the sprouts of intellectual activity while at the same time allowing for the expression of feelings. In his book *From Shamanism to Rituality, Explaining Rituality as a Return to the Humanness*, Li describes this development in the following way:

In this process of rationalization, all kinds of activities that originally only served as intermediaries or tools for performing shamanistic ceremonies

21 Mou Zongsan 牟宗三, the main representative of the second generation of Modern Confucianism, for instance, has interpreted the notion of the “inner sage and external ruler” as the dichotomy of transcendental and empirical Self (see Rošker 2016, ch. 6.2).

became symbolic systems and operators. They were increasingly objectified, objectivized, and recorded, but still contained strong emotions and beliefs like fear, respect, loyalty, and honesty.

本在巫術禮儀中作為中介或工具的自然對象和各種活動，都在這一理性化的過程中演化而成為符號性的系統和系統操作。它日益對象化、客觀化、敘事化，卻又仍然包含有畏、敬、忠、誠等強烈情感和信仰於其中。

LI ZEHOU 2015, 16–17

These feelings and faiths became the most important foundations for the later establishment and spread of Confucian moral virtues and values. Because the shamanistic rituals were a form of the unity of human beings with the spirits (*yu shen tongzai* 與神同在), they were not venerating any objectified deities, but could be perceived as a sensual experience of the inherent and were inseparable from them. Li exposes that in such a union, there was no room for any “transcendence” or for any objectively existing God (*ibid.*, 23). In this procedure of rationalization the shamans, who were originally spiritual or religious leaders, progressively also became ethical and political leaders. According to Li, this is also the main reason or the source of the tripartite nature of Confucianism, in which religion, ethics, and politics are amalgamated into a coherent and inseparable unity. However, he is convinced that this union of politics, ethics, and religion, which is still widespread in modern and contemporary Chinese societies, needs to be changed in order to achieve a “Chinese style of separation of religion and state” (Li Zehou 2016, 190).

He also criticizes various Modern Confucian attempts to revive the traditional Chinese unity of morals and to synthesize modern social morality with the traditional religious one. He sharply criticizes them for

taking the contemporary requirement for fulfilling individual desires, (which, in fact, belongs to the individual-based liberalism) as the basis of traditional Chinese “unity of self and the objects” or of the “great spiritual self.” Moreover, the latter should still envelop the former and modify it to become a part of “inherent relations.”²² (Such ideas) overlook the huge discrepancies and basic contradictions between the two approaches.

22 The inherent or inner relations (*neide guanxi* 內的關係) is a concept mentioned by Feng Youlan 馮友蘭 in his letter to Liang Qichao 梁啟超. It refers to “truly human” relations, i.e., relations that—inter alia—involve emotion and were developed in the Chinese tradition. Such relations stand in sharp contradiction to contractual, reason-dominated model of relations, which was developed in the course of modern Western societies and which Feng denotes as external relations (*waide guanxi* 外的關係) (Li Zehou 2016b, 53).

將滿足個體欲望現代要求（實既個人本位的自由主義）作為中國傳統“物我一體”“精神大我”... 的基礎，而仍以後者“籠罩”前者，成為“內的關係”而忽視了這兩者的重大差異和根本矛盾。

LI ZEHOU 2016b, 54

But, on the other hand, the proponents of Westernization and China's modernization also failed to establish a functioning complementary model of social and religious morality, in which the social morality could assume the primary and dominant position. On the contrary, their theories and their propaganda additionally contributed to the muddling of the two kinds of morality. In the 1919 May Fourth Movement, for instance, social morality, which is concerned with human rights, democracy and libertarianism, and is supposed to be value neutral, became part of the anti-traditional stance. Hence, the representatives of this movement have made it a part of an ideology and a part of religious morality (*ibid.*).

In principle, Li certainly believes that modern China should restore rationality, by which he—in contrast to Modern Confucian philosophers like Mou Zongsan 牟宗三—did not imply that it should reconstruct any kind of “transcendental” but rather a pragmatic reason (*ibid.*). He believes that the revival of paradigmatic cultural values, will prevent China's transformation into a pure “market society,” which is based upon a commercialized culture, entirely ruled by material desires (Li, Zehou 2016, 1071).

By applying the revived and modernized complementary model of the “new way of the inner sage and external ruler,” a spontaneous regulation of these unlimited desires and inclinations could become possible without rigidly constraining human desires through religions or ideologies of guilt. Hence, Li emphasizes that it is important for Chinese people to revive their own traditional “culture of pleasure,” which rested on a complementary equilibrium of reason and emotions.

Such ideas could also function for the construction of alternative models of morality, preventing the absolute domination of liberal standards, which prevail in contemporary (especially Western) societies. Hence, Li advocates the use of the “emotio-rational structure” drawn from traditional Chinese thought to correct the public reason, which is also typical for liberalism, especially its overemphasis on procedural formal justice, the exaggerate stress upon the nuclear individual, and upon an absolute free choice. In certain situations, his theory of two moralities also includes the infiltration of “substantive justice.” This kind of justice can be found in some traditional Chinese discourses: we can seize it through many categories and through various historical models,

as for instance through *qing*, i.e., the emotional responds to different situations, through relationality, the emotio-rational structure, the concept *du* (度) as a specific Chinese kind of grasping the proper measure, and situational flexibility.

In Li's view, this could help implement the regulation and proper ethical constitution of contemporary societies and could guide societies through virtue rather than mere utilitarian categories of benefit, free choice, and other values serving the market rather than people. But when referring to the values and basic paradigms of liberalism, Li also points out that Chinese and Western societies differ in their social development and in their respective cultural traditions. It is thus not a coincidence that in their histories, they also established different ideas on morality and virtue ethics, with Aristotle and Christianity on the one side and traditional Chinese virtue ethics on the other (Li, Zehou 2016, 1130).

Here, it is important to note that the relationship between the constitutive principles of modern social morality on the one, and the regulative ones of traditional religious morality is always historically concrete and shaped in accordance with the material circumstances and conditions determining the distinct society in question. Neither moral values, nor social or political rights are composed of any a-priori principles; both are clearly products of history.

Li also exposes that the axiological standards or central criteria applied by the two kinds of morality are different. In this sense, the modern social morality is based upon what is "right," i.e., upon a domination of public reason that ought to be accorded with in modern social life. In contrast to this platform, traditional religious moralities in existing religions, traditions, cultures, and ideologies mainly rely on the concept of "goodness." Although what is "right" is often equated with what is "good," he emphasizes that these two concepts need to be distinguished from one another, because in numerous cultures what is "right or wrong" differs significantly from what is "good or evil." Li Zehou sees the neutrality of values as an important constituent of modern societies. For him, right does not necessarily have to rely on any particular tradition or present conception of "good." As regards the numerous problems and excesses arising from value neutrality, "these can be dealt with through making judgments and decisions according to what is rationally and emotionally appropriate according to particular situations" (ibid., 1133).

On the basis of the emotio-rational structure, which prevailed in the social consciousness of the Chinese cultures, these judgments made in concrete situations could be more balanced and just. Li thinks that taking into account human emotion (as Confucianism did), coupled with psychological considerations

that were also important in Chinese tradition and with its desire to maintain people's inherent connection with the world, will definitely expand contemporary social morality, and provide alternative opinions and suggestions for its improvement (Li Zehou 2016b, 57). He believes that approaches based on the theory of two types of morality provide good methods to combine the Chinese tradition with contemporary political philosophical investigations that seek a separation of church and state.

5 Political Philosophy and Moral Psychology

As we have seen in the previous sections, Li strictly differentiates between ethics and morality, highlighting that the former belongs to the outer norms while the latter pertains to human inwardness. We next see how these two discourses relate to one another in his ethical theory.

Li's distinction between ethics and morality is also reflected in an analogous differentiation between the two theoretical disciplines dealing with each of them. In Li's ethical system, human morality is a system pertaining to moral psychology, a discourse that refers to the internal psychological structures of the individual.²³ Ethics, on the other hand, belongs to the realms explored and transformed by political philosophy.²⁴ However, he also exposes (Li Zehou 2016, 1111) that even though his ethical thought contains elements of both discourses, it cannot be limited to (or identified with) either of these two fields as such.

In the Chinese traditional one-world-view, due to the holistic Chinese cosmology, these two discourses are somewhat difficult to separate:

From ancient times until the present day, the Chinese notion of “*tian* 天” has a double nature. On the one hand, it refers to a non-anthropomorphic deity in the sense of Heaven, and, on the other, to the natural sky. This means that such a worldview affirms human life from two perspectives, the material and the spiritual. Therefore, people are supposed to deal with their life and to investigate the world in which they live, including

23 In the Chinese tradition, it manifests itself in many different classical discourses, as for instance in a statement by Mencius “Humaneness, justice, rituality, and wisdom are not infused into us from outside. We are originally furnished with them” (仁義禮智，非由外鑠我也，我固有之也, *Mengzi* s.d., Gaozi 1: 6) (Li Zehou 2016d, 7).

24 When speaking about the current bifurcation of ethics, however, Li also acknowledges the existence of religious ethics that can be treated by religious philosophy, especially regarding the problem of goodness.

its essence and all its particular circumstances, in an affirmative, positive, and optimistic way. This applies to both political philosophy with its ethical norms, and moral psychology, which refers to individual moral cultivation.

中國的“天”從古至今皆有雙重性格，一方面是非人格神而有神性的上天 (Heaven)，另一方面是自然的天空 (sky)。這種兩重性的意義在於，它從物質和精神兩個方面肯定著人的生活，從而人就該以肯定性的積極樂觀的情感態度來論證、認識此生此世、此性此情。無論在倫理規範的政治哲學上，還是在個體修養的道德心理學上，都如此。

LI ZEHOU 2016d, 8

This correlative interaction between moral psychology and political philosophy also marks Li's specific ethical system. In his anthropo-historical ontology, Li proceeds from the entirety of the humankind, which is, however, connected to and reflected in the individual. Even though many people see some of his notions, as for instance the concept of emotion-based substance, as chiefly pertaining to the individual (see e.g., Li Zehou and Liu Xuyuan 2011a, 51), he emphasizes that it cannot be limited to the inward moral psychology, but also comprises a dimension of extension, in which it represents a part of political philosophy. In this sense, he proceeds from traditional Chinese philosophy, in which the concept of emotion (*qing* 情) includes collective perspectives that are determined by particular material social conditions.

However, in spite of their correlativity and their mutual influence, we must not forget that moral psychology and political philosophy are still two separate discourses. In Western philosophy, this separation is mainly seen as an absolute one. The dominant currents of Western political philosophy are mostly based upon reason: this is also the reason why it is difficult for the majority of Western theoreticians to understand Li's model, in which "harmony is higher than justice" (*hexie gaoyu zhengyi* 和諧高于正義). While the Western concept of justice is linked to rational approaches, Li's harmony does not only pertain to emotion, but rather to the complementary relation between reason and emotion (Li Zehou and Liu Yuedi 2014, 195).

Li Zehou believes that moral psychology is not actually a psychology, but rather pertains to philosophy (Li Zehou and Liu Yuedi 2014a, 7). It includes motivation of human actions, in which free will (as the distinctive human capacity) operates in accordance with the conceptions of good and evil, which represent a kind of rational knowledge. However, emotions also belong to the main components of human moral psychology and since they are governed by reason in Li's theoretical model, their role in human moral actions is also

very significant. This correlativity of reason and emotions represents a foundation of the aforementioned emotio-rational structure of the human mind. Emotions possess a remarkable impulsive power, by which they help human beings carry out rational behavior. This is possible because the governance of reason “involves not only control, suppression, and even extinguishing of desires (although this is its principal aspect), but also the cultivation, development, and even catharsis of certain emotions and desires as well” (*ibid.*).

Moral principles are not limited to moral psychology, but can also belong to the realm of political and ethical philosophy. Hence, Li emphasizes that there is a difference between the three crucial moral principles of Kant’s deontology, namely the categorical imperative, the concept of humans as ends, and the free will, which is capable of constituting universal legislation. In Li’s view (*ibid.*, 1105), the notion that humans as ends belongs to the realm of political philosophy and modern ethics, which deals with external human culture, whereas the first and third principles fall under the moral psychology of human inwardness. Li sees Kant’s second principle as a product of its time, defined by contents of historical actuality. In his opinion, the principle of “human beings as ends in themselves” is a kind of social ideal that is similar to those of human rights or equality a result of historical social development reaching a specific stage. In fact, it is a part of modern social morality (Li Zehou 2016d, 9). The categorical imperative and the free will, on the other hand, have always represented crucial parts of that which makes human beings human. Hence, Li understands Kant’s first and third principle as belonging to moral psychology, but the second one as pertaining to political philosophy establishing universal laws for all of humankind (Li Zehou and Liu Yuedi 2014, 24). In this respect, Li’s understanding of Kant’s three principles of morality (and their mutual relation) differs from the majority of prevailing interpretations:

Although in Kant’s thought these²⁵ maintain an internal connection to his second principle that humans are as ends ... they nevertheless differ importantly from it. As this “free will” capable of “universal legislation” is merely a formal element of psychology, it finds great difficulty in possessing substantial content and is thus exceedingly vague and unspecific.

ibid.

This questioning of the absolute and static nature of free will belongs to the main critiques of Kant’s deontology. Li Zehou also criticizes Kant’s ahistorical view of such human mental formations, for in his view, they all are

²⁵ That is, the first and the third principles.

products of history, i.e., of the human material practice. According to Li, Kant's understanding is necessary a product of the Western "two-worlds view," which makes an existence of absolute transcendental forms possible. In Li's understanding, Kant's theory is also too formal, for his a-priori formations lack any kind of concrete content. However, in contrast with the majority of similar critiques (e.g., Hegel's, Marx's, or Comte's), Li does not assume the thoroughly relativist view of human moral capacities. For him, they are products of history, but at the same time they are also the core part of humanness, i.e., that which makes us human (Li Zehou 2016b, 19–21). In this context, he exposes that such absoluteness can be found in humans themselves. In this sense, the notion "human" should be written as such, "Human," for it refers to every individual that has, does, will, or possibly could ever exist (Li Zehou and Liu Yuedi 2014, 24). Such absoluteness defines the entirety of the humankind and its potential. For the individual, it appears as an "a-priori principle." Everyone who is human has an absolute duty to submit to this concept, and one who does not is not a human. Hence, in spite of criticizing Kant for his ahistorical view of human autonomy and freedom, Li still holds his deontological ethics in highest esteem and exposes its "epoch-defining, eternal value for humanity" (Li, Zehou 2016, 1104).

According to Li, moral psychology, which refers to the internal psychological structures of the individual, contains three major elements: the concepts of good and evil, human emotions, and human capacity of free will. He emphasizes the importance of humanness and deals therefore with questions of individual moral psychology in a very detailed way. However, in this context, he repeatedly emphasizes that he is not so much interested in its empirical aspects as in its philosophical perspectives. Therefore, his ethics also contains elements of political philosophy. He establishes it on the basis of a unity of emotion and reason, and investigates from this perspective concrete people living in concrete relationships. On such foundations, Li's ethical and political philosophy deals—inter alia—with important notions deriving from Chinese such as "harmony is higher than justice" or "integration of Confucianism and Legalism." All such notions, which will be explained in detail in later sections of this book, belong to historical discourses that are not a priori or transcendental, but rather express important contents of concrete historical developments. Li elaborates on them through the lens of his anthropo-historical ontology and sees them as rooted in the important tread of what he calls "emotion-based substance."

He believes that in the near future, political philosophy will become an exceptionally significant academic discipline in China, because contemporary economic and political institutions are defined by modern legal structures and

are based on contractual models, which take the individual as a constitutive unit. Political philosophy, which is dedicated to investigating the multifaceted problems related to these phenomena, can help clarify various questions linked to China's modernization and solve many problems prevailing in its transitional periods. Proceeding from the theory of two moralities, such

political philosophy should explore methods, by which Chinese tradition could systematically transform these universal values, derived from the West, in order to create a model which is more suitable to the Chinese way.

因為它在政治哲學上就要研究如何使中國傳統範導這些西方傳來的普世價值創造出一種適合中國的道路和模式。

LI ZEHOU 2011a, 6

In Li's view, the relicts of the traditional blending of religion, politics and ethics in Chinese religious morality are still an obstacle for the realization of contemporary social morality, which relies on an abstracted individual and takes the concrete living individual and their particular experiences as the subject, and as the foundational unit of society. In such contexts, the individual has priority over the community. However, in traditional China (similar to many other premodern cultures), the individuals mostly belonged to their community. In such systems, the individuals took the sustained existence of the community as the main principle of action. To a certain extent, this type of traditional morality still dominates the individuals in China in an indirect or even a direct manner. In this context, Li repeatedly emphasizes that society is always made up of individuals, and therefore it should not be valued higher than the individual. However, every individual is different as are their existences and their interests. Such discrepancies need to be regulated by social contracts, which could establish the basis for the contemporary social morals, regulating both legal and political spheres of society.

On the other hand, he points out that in contemporary era, legal and political philosophies are, among other issues, also confronted with numerous complex problems related to the process of globalization. They need to deal with questions such as how different countries and societies with different interests should relate and collaborate with each other, or how individuals can become "citizens of the world." In this respect, Li is skeptical and does not believe in various "recipes" offered by philosophies of libertarianism or communitarianism. He criticizes the former for dogmatically endorsing the idea that "the group exists for the individual," and even positing it as an ahistorical

a-priori principle. Communitarianism, on the other hand, promotes the notion that “the individual exists for the group,” which might have some advantages in Western societies, which are much too exclusively focused upon the abstract individual. However, in contemporary China, it is anti-modern and anti-historical.

As always, Li also supports a historical perspective and points out that in his view, human beings evolve from the model in which “individuals exist for the group” to structures in which “the group exists for the individual.” From this perspective, libertarianism is more suitable for the current Chinese societies than communitarianism. Even though he thinks that the arguments for communitarianism are substantial, Li believes that under the current circumstances, this ideology might actually worsen China’s present situation in ethics, politics, and economy.

Epistemological Approaches and Ontological Foundations

In this chapter, we will discuss some innovative paradigms of Li Zehou's philosophical system, which—in their pure form—pertain to ontology and epistemology, but simultaneously also underlie the referential network of his ethical thought. We will investigate the positions, functions, and mutual influences of these paradigms within the inner coherence of the general framework of Li's thought. This chapter also aims to show how and why in this framework, many aspects of traditional Chinese ethics and morality play an essential role.

We open with introductions to some crucial concepts, which define the basic groundwork of Li's philosophy of ethics, such as the pragmatic reason, the emotion-based substance and the emotio-rational structure. Based on the understanding of these crucial ideas, we will analyze and interpret Li's views on some more specific ideas linked to ethics and morality. In this context, we will explore the role and the significance of traditional rituality, and the Confucian notion of harmony from the perspective of traditional Chinese idea of autonomy, and its inherent relation to Li Zehou's own, self-coined concept of the subjectality.

This critical outline begins with a description and an analysis of Li Zehou's notions of pragmatic reason, the emotio-rational structure, and emotion-based substance. These concepts, which are grounded in a revival, modification and reinterpretation of classical Chinese, especially Confucian philosophy,¹ belong to the fundamental paradigms of Li's philosophical and ethical system.

1 However, he also emphasizes that as a vital part of the Chinese tradition, pragmatic reason was by no means limited to Confucianism: "It is a kind of traditional Chinese spirit, which was not only Confucian, but also present in Daoism." (這是一種中國傳統精神，不僅是儒家，而且道家也有, Li Zehou 2016, 147). In this sense, Li even explains that in the first chapter of Laozi's *Daode jing* 道德經 (*The Book of the Way and the Virtue*), his central notion of the Way (*Dao* 道) does not imply any substance or any cosmological principle, but rather refers to pragmatics and application (ibid., 194). For him, Daoism reveals the aspects of wisdom contained in the notion of pragmatic reason. Such "complementary relation of Confucianism and Daoism" is also a specifically Chinese version of the relation between the religious and social morality (ibid., 195).

1 The Ethics of Pragmatic Reason

Li Zehou emphasizes that traditional Chinese social, axiological and political systems were permeated with a rational attitude or spirit (Li Zehou 1980a, 89), which defined what he calls “pragmatic reason” (*shiyong lixing* 實用理性). In the first draft of his book titled “A Reevaluation of Confucius” (*Kongzi zai pingjia* 孔子再評價), Li initially denoted this kind of rationality as “*shijian lixing*” 實踐理性 (Li Zehou 1980a, 77).² However, in Chinese translations of Western philosophical texts of the time, this concept was already widely applied as a translation of Immanuel Kant’s “practical reason.” Therefore, Li explained in a footnote to this text (ibid., 89, footnote 3) that Kant’s “practical reason” differs from his own concept, which derives from Confucian rationality.³ Later, he created the term “pragmatic reason” to clearly distinguish between the two notions. According to Li, the Chinese cultural tradition is focused upon this kind of reason because it looks down on pure speculative thinking. He noted, however, that even though they are different, there is still a certain similarity between Kant’s and his own concept, especially concerning their close connection to ethics, which was a basic characteristic of both concepts (Li Zehou 2008, 246).

In general, most people see reason (*lixing* 理性) as an epistemological category. In Li’s system, it is also a fundamental concept pertaining to his philosophy of ethics, because epistemology arises from ethics and hence the latter defines the former:

Ethics is primary, and epistemology secondary. Cognitive laws (like linguistics or logic) evolve from ethical imperatives. This is immensely important.

先有倫理，後有認識。認識規則（語法，邏輯）是從倫理律令中演化出來的，這一點至為重要。

LI ZEHOU 2016b, 260

Ethical norms develop in accordance with the principles of pragmatic rationality, which are tightly linked to particular historical and social contexts and to *qing*, i.e., the shared emotional realms that arise in human beings in

2 Prior to that, already in the 60s, he simply applied a more general term, “Chinese rationalism” (*Zhongguo lixingzhuyi* 中國理性主義), in order to highlight the specific nature of this kind of reason (Li Zehou and Liu Yuedi 2014a, 4).

3 In fact, Li Zehou viewed this kind of rationality as belonging to the central paradigms determining Confucianism, which he hence even defined as “a Chinese philosophy of pragmatic reason” (see Gu 2018, 77).

these contexts.⁴ In this sense, it is a product of human material practices. Li explained that pragmatic reason could not be equated to the modern Western notion of cognitive (*renzhi lixing* 認知理性) or ethical reason (*lunli lixing* 倫理理性), which are both rooted in a strict separation between subject and object, neutrality of values, objective truth, natural rights, independent individual or formal justice. In this context, it has to be seen as a different kind of reasonableness (*ibid.*, 304), one that simultaneously pertains to material practice and to cognitive patterns or laws (Li Zehou 2008, 246).

A detailed elaboration on pragmatic reason and its relations to other crucial concepts such as the “culture of pleasure,”⁵ was first published in Li Zehou’s book, *On Ancient Chinese Intellectual History* (*Zhongguo gudai sixiang shilun* 中國古代思想史論), which was published in 1985. At that time, it was popular to be anti-traditional, and many Chinese scholars harshly criticized him for promoting such ideas and also for advocating thereby a revival and a transformed continuation of Chinese traditional culture, not only in terms of its superficial forms and patterns, but also in terms of its cultural “spirit.”

4 Li often explains that instinctive human feelings had to be cultivated and molded into norms through reasonable, sensitive regulations. However, he never clearly defines the standards of such reasonableness, thus failing to demonstrate the actual criteria of determining what is actually “crazy,” “evil,” “ugly,” or “deconstructive,” and hence must be eliminated by the activation of pragmatic reason. Even though he emphasizes the importance of the dynamic nature of pragmatic reason, its utilitarian tendency, and especially its openness toward innovations and alternations, it remains difficult to understand what underlies this kind of regulations, which chiefly appear in restrictions. Although Li mentions that (similar to Dewey’s pragmatism) the truth is determined by what is positive and useful for a society, and although the concrete content of this usefulness is subject to continuous alternations, the question about what (or who) has the actual power of determining this usefulness (or this truth) remains open. Yet, it is clear that in Li’s system, the concrete contents of these regulations and restrictions necessarily also change according to the nature of power structures and relations existing in actual, changing cultures and societies.

5 With this term, Li denotes the characteristic spirit, which defined traditional Chinese cultures and societies. In his view, it was a product of the fact that its cultural psychology was not focused upon any kind of transcendental reality, but rather took human life as its elementary substance. Against such an ideational background, people could maintain their life as their ultimate ideal and goal, without suffering under burdens resulting from a division between body and mind (Li Zehou 2016, 158). He emphasizes “‘The culture of pleasure’ does not separate the soul from the flesh. It affirms human existence and human life in this world. Even in the most devastating and difficult situations, people could still firmly believe that in the end, everything will turn around toward a bright future. This brightness did not come from any Heavenly kingdom, but was rather a part of this world” (‘樂感文化’ 重視靈肉不分離，肯定人在這個世界的生存和生活。即使在黑暗和災難年代，也相信 “否極泰來”，前途光明，這光明不在天國，而在這個世界。)(*ibid.*).

For many years later Li elaborated further on the concept in different ways. He explained it (as well as its connection to the specifically Chinese type of culture, i.e., “the culture of pleasure”) in detail in his book entitled, *Pragmatic Reason and the Culture of Pleasure* (*Shiyong lixing yu legan wenhua* 實用理性與樂感文化), which was completed in 2004, but first published in January 2005.

Typical for China, the pragmatic reason as a form of nontranscendental moral reasoning was a product of the one-world-view, which is paradigmatic for traditional Chinese thought. It arose through the practice of its early shamanistic-historical tradition. Pragmatic reason is characteristic of classical Confucianism and a crucial element of the traditional Chinese culture of pleasure (D'Ambrosio, Carleo, and Lambert 2016, 1063). “Li believes that this pragmatic reason and the Confucian humanistic tradition have formed China more than anything else and have contributed to its long and uninterrupted civilization” (Pohl 2018, 65). Hence, it is not a coincidence that this form of reason not only belongs to, but also determines and permeates all five major factors defining the traditional Chinese culture, which can be found according to Li's analysis and interpretation of the Confucian *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語) in the following features:

1. Blood (kinship) relations;
2. Psychological principles;
3. Humanism;
4. Ideal personality;
5. Pragmatic reason.

The characteristic feature of pragmatic reason was its pragmatic orientation toward the actual, material world in which people live. This kind of reason was not limited to an abstract, cognitive, or theoretical kind of rationality.⁶ The dominant cultures in ancient China were more or less indifferent toward such speculative reason. Already the earliest Confucian scholars mainly believed that abstract reasoning without a direct link to actual life was meaningless. In this sense, pragmatic reason primarily means that the practical undertakings in actual society have to be governed by rationality. In such framework, emotions and desires are cultivated by means of rational principles. Li Zehou believes that in the beginning of human evolution, people's operative accomplishments in the form of making and applying tools offered them prospects for controlling the environments in which they lived. In the course of historical

6 Li also claims, however, that even though material practice is the very origin of any kind of rationality, human reasoning is evolving further and it surpasses such an origin. However, human societies and their specific conditions are always its concrete historical foundation, for “laws, standards, and values come from the historic building up of pragmatic reason, and they do so in the interaction of humans with the world; they do not depart from it” (Lynch 2016, 719).

development, the accumulation of such experiences enabled them to surpass other species and become supra-biological beings. Such developments shaped this kind of specifically human reason, which sedimented in the vibrant formations of human mind. Even though this exclusively human feature was still rooted in our animal nature, it also allowed people to transcend their physical limitations. For Li, the making and using of tools is the original human practice and from this, through a long historical process of accumulation and sedimentation, a cultural-psychological formation takes shape that eventually operates beyond discrete practices (Ames and Jia 2018, 14).

In his anthropo-historical ontology, Li therefore argues that human rationality is generated from empirical reasonableness. The operational labor (*laodong caozuo* 勞動操作) of making and using tools shaped the specifically human forms of knowledge (logic, mathematics, dialectics, and so on). When such labor advanced in human societies, it also generated ethics and morality.

In this context, Li Zehou highlights that Confucianism has always laid stress upon the ethical practice. Even though for most Confucians, there is no supernatural or metaphysical source of human cognition, pragmatic reason still cannot be seen as functioning in a simple one-to-one correspondence with the empirical world (Lynch 2016, 718). To a certain extent and in certain aspects, Li's theory of pragmatic reason can be compared to Dewey's pragmatism, for both theories see usefulness as a measure for determining reasonable behavior. However, there is a very important difference between them as well, and Li Zehou emphasizes that his ethics is not a form of pragmatism but rather belongs to anthropological ontology⁷ (Li Zehou 2011, 159). The basic approaches of this theory can also help us clarify a question that was raised in this context by Andrew Lambert, namely, how could Li Zehou establish the categorical imperative (which he unquestionably endorses)⁸ as a foundational principle, given that he rejects Kant's category of the *a priori* in human cognition.

7 Regardless of this, some Western scholars (as for instance Catherine Lynch) still believe that Li's ethics belongs to a wider field of pragmatism, and that Li is one of the most creative representatives of this current: "Lynch concludes that while Li's historical ontology fits within the scope and aims of pragmatism, it also steers pragmatism into some new, productive directions" (Ames and Jia 2018, 14).

8 He admires Kant for his construction of the categorical imperative by which he described the most fundamental characteristic of ethical behavior determined by the governance of reason. Li often emphasized that its function is comparable to one of an absolute order or a divine decree, which has to be followed even without any additional argumentation. In this sense, Li believes that the sublime power of categorical imperative has liberated people from all fears, but also from all instantaneous worldly wishes (*ibid.*, 20).

More specifically, given that such a form of rationality is not crucial to the Confucian tradition—a tradition in which, according to Li, pragmatic reasoning (*shiyong lixing*) dominates—then how could it come to hold a dominant place in the psychological formation of a subject immersed in that tradition?

LAMBERT 2018, 103–104

Lambert finds the answer to this important question in the unboundedness of the cultural-psychological formation, which represents the central concept of Li's theory of mind. This means that this formation is open to all influences "as long as these can be integrated into existing social practices and categories of understanding" (*ibid.*, 104). In Lambert's view, this is also the reason why globalized psychological formations could gradually emerge in the cultural-psychological formations of different cultures in Li's system. In this way, the Chinese tradition could absorb numerous initially foreign influences, including the idea of the categorical imperative. As Lambert puts it, "In a global marketplace of concepts and ways of thinking and feeling, the categorical imperative could emerge as the acme of reason, something to which subjects feel a strong commitment" (Lambert 2018, 104).

It is certainly true that Li Zehou seems to present the categorical imperative as a universal ideal toward the realization of which all people and all cultures evolve. However, Li never seems to have seen this form of reason as something that could be (via modernization and globalization) introduced from other cultures to the cultural-psychological formation of the "Chinese mind." First, in Li's system, particular forms of human mind were shaped and accumulated through much longer periods of history. Second, the categorical reason is not merely "a form of thinking and feeling" (see the above quotation) but a basic formation of human mind; hence, it cannot be limited to methods of cognition or a cognitive means to decide upon discrete moral actions. Third (and perhaps most important), in Li's view, Confucianism certainly contained absolute principles that could have evolved through nothing else but a specifically Chinese version of categorical imperative. Here, we have to note that in contrast to pragmatism, Li's pragmatic reason not only accepts but also respects, follows, and even underlines its correspondence with objective principles, laws, or codes, which are independent from concrete, situationally conditioned human inclinations or experiences. The Confucian philosophical tradition denoted these objective orders and principles as "the Way of Heaven" (*tian dao* 天道) or the "decree of Heaven" (*tian ming* 天命) (Li Zehou 2008, 247). Although Li's pragmatic reason is by no means a transcendental instrument, it still governs human behavior in accordance with absolute norms, which are

certainly comparable to Kant's categorical imperative. Li repeatedly emphasizes that its sublime power is something that in principle is shared by all human species, for it belongs to those special foundational principles, which make human beings human.⁹

Hence, pragmatic reason can be seen as a philosophical generalization of reasonableness, but one that negates the pure form of speculative reasoning a priori. Although it considers the influences of relativity, uncertainty, and non-objectivity, it is by no means a kind of relativism, for it is still determined by absolute norms and principles (Wang 2018, 231–232).

This amalgamation of historical and categorical elements comprised in the concept of pragmatic reason is often difficult to understand through the lens of Western philosophy. This is because Western academia mostly proceeds from an approach that includes a strict division between the absoluteness of psychological forms on the one side, and multifaceted, changeable features of human historical development on the other. In Li's view, such a separation is a necessary result of the so-called two-world view (*liangge shijie guan* 兩個世界觀) that prevailed in Western philosophical discourses. Hence, Li highlights the double ontological nature of this kind of rationality:

Pragmatic reason ... manifests itself on the surfactant levels of cultural features, but simultaneously, it also constructs deep structures of specifically human mind.

實用理性 ... 既是呈現於表層的文化特徵，也是構成深層的心理特點。

LI ZEHOU 2016d, 119

In Li's view, the basic principles of Confucian ethics are comparable to those constitutive to Kant's categorical imperative. Both models are systems of self-inflicted restrictions or guidelines, standing in a shrill contrast to those forcibly imposed to people from outside. In this context, Li emphasizes that such standards are not only an integral part of Kant's categorical imperative, but also represent a core part of Confucian ethics. He points out that it can be found in

9 In fact, Li confirms the absolute nature of the categorical imperative and even of the free will. These two elements represent the first and the third principle of Kant's deontology. However, Li denies such universal validity in regard to the second principle, which Kant still regarded as absolute; this principle exposes human beings as the ends in themselves. In contrast to Kant's view, Li exposes that this second principle is not absolute, for it is a product of its time, defined by different social conditions and different contents of concrete historical situations. However, he emphasizes its overall importance and argues that China could benefit from assimilating Kant's idea that "humans should be treated as ends" into its moral culture (D'Ambrosio 2016, 725).

numerous well-known Confucian quotations (Li Zehou 2016b, 208) such as in the following dialogue, in which Confucius tried to explain to his disciple Yan Yuan that moral principles are a part of the inner nature of human beings and not something that are enforced upon them from outside.

Yan Yuan asked about humaneness. The Master replied: “Humaneness can be achieved through self-control and a revival of rituality. If you can control yourself and revive rituality only for one single day, all under heaven will return to humaneness.”

顏淵問仁。子曰：克己復禮為仁。一日克己復禮，天下歸仁焉。

Lunyu s.d., Yan Yuan: 1

Li believes that such statements belong to rational categorical imperatives. Regarding their emphasis upon such characteristic features of moral psychology, Confucius and Kant are entirely in agreement (Li Zehou 2016b, 208).

Li emphasizes that in both Confucian and Kantian model, such categorical imperatives belong to morality, which is internal and represents a crucial part of human psychological formations. In his view, categorical imperative is a mental form described by both Confucian and Kantian moral philosophies, which equally emphasize that while human beings (as individuals) are educated and cultivated by ethics, by different systems and orders they still possess psychological formations of an absolute nature (Li Zehou and Tong Shijun 2012, 172). Therefore, Li still considers Confucianism as comprising certain “semireligious” elements, although the Confucian teachings are not based on any idea of an external (anthropomorphic) god.¹⁰

In this context, Li highlights that such a theoretical foundation pertains to agnosticism, which was philosophically quite mature for ancient times, because the existence of supernatural deities is difficult to scientifically confirm or to falsify. In his view, such an agnostic principle is strong evidence for the “clear rational spirit” inherent to the Confucian ideational system (Li Zehou

10 Confucianism was clearly defined by agnosticism (see Rošker 2019, 143). In the Confucian *Analects*, we come across several passages in which the existence of deities is questioned, even though never explicitly denied. The Confucian *Analects* clearly state that Confucius does not teach about “strange powers and irrational deities” (子不語怪力亂神) (*Lunyu* s.d., Shu’er: 490). Allegedly, he also claimed that “we are not even capable of serving humans, so how could (or why should) we serve ghosts” (未能事人，焉能事鬼) (ibid., Xian Jin: 569), and that “we even don’t understand life, so how could we know anything about death” (未知生，焉知死) (ibid.). Hence, the most reasonable thing one could do was to “keep a respectful distance from spirits and ghosts” (敬鬼神而遠之，可謂知矣) (ibid., Yong Ye: 459).

1980, 89). Therefore, the rationalization of emotion, which took place in China in the course of transforming natural religions into the ethics of humaneness (*ren* 仁), was not based upon restraints of human desires. In the traditional Chinese “culture of pleasure,” people were instead offered a regulated way of satisfying their wishes and needs.

There was no need for an external God, whose orders, which were based upon irrational authority, should be blindly followed. On the other hand, people still possessed hope for salvation (humanism) and self-fulfillment (individual sense of mission) without rejecting this world or humiliating themselves.... Everything could be left to the balanced measure and regulative function of the pragmatic reason.

不需要外在的上帝的命令，不盲目服從非理性的權威，卻仍然可以拯救世界（人道主義）和自我完成（個體人格和使命感）；不厭棄人世，也不自我屈辱、……，一切都放在實用的理性天平上加以衡量和處理。

LI ZEHOU 1980, 89

Similar to most other concepts of Li Zehou's ideational system, which is based on paradigmatic foundations of Confucianism and some other Chinese philosophical traditions, pragmatic reason is also a dynamic notion (Li Zehou 2008, 250). Its dialectical logic is by no means “fatalistically deterministic” (Lynch 2016, 719) but rather opens enough space for considerations of situationally determined necessities and contingencies, including the “potential and accidental elements of human choices and decisions” (ibid.). Li often writes that in applying pragmatic reason, people have the choice to modify and regulate their own lives:

“Pragmatic reason” is situational, it arises from a certain situation, but it does not belong to the situational ethics.

“實用理性”就是看 situation 的，從情境出發嘛，但它又不是情境倫理學。

LI ZEHOU AND LIU YUEDI 2014, 214

In this way, the correlative dialectical interactions between eventuality and necessity, and between potentiality and factuality, define the concrete operating dimension and came to be the historic keynote of human existence.

Although it operates in accordance with objective principles, pragmatic reason is not absolute in the sense of transcending all time and space; in this sense, it is not entirely a-priori. As we have seen above, even though the

Confucian pragmatic reason includes the cultivation and the development of moral formations, which belong to human inwardness and can be regarded as a kind of categorical imperative, it also comprises emotions.

There is also another famous reply, ascribed to Confucius, namely “a person who possesses humaneness loves human beings.” The content, which is emphasized in this reply, is indeed something emotional. We also saw that quotations such as “self-control” and “revival of rituality” lay stress upon reason. However, in general, we can see from numerous descriptions of humaneness given by Confucius that he mostly referred to human emotio-rational structure, which consists of both reason and emotion (*qing*). Kant, on the other hand, only speaks about reason. His concept of reason surpasses and outgrows the humankind, whereas the Confucian emotio-rational structure explicitly belongs to the humans. This is a fundamental difference.

孔子還有“仁者愛人”的著名回答，這個回答所突出的，確是情感，有如“克己復禮”的回答側重理性，但總擴孔子對“仁”的眾多回答，其最終歸結仍在塑建既有情又有理的人性情理結構，而不同於康德只講理性之上。康德理性是超於和高於人類的，孔夫子的“情理結構”是專屬於人類的。這就是根本的不同。

LI ZEHOU 2016b, 208

For Li, material existence is fundamental, and this kind of reason is necessarily a product of material practice and arises from it. According to Li, the operative processes of work, and its products provide the basic contents of experiences. However, symbolic operations abstracted from this foundation come to possess an independent character that can be separated from concrete experiences (Lynch 2016, 719). In this sense, reason cannot be hypostatized; it is just a manner of cognizance or an instrument that can be used by people when dealing with various issues and objects from their life.

Reason is merely a tool, and the ultimate goal of “pragmatic reason” is the sustainable preservation of human existence. Not only does it not possess any transcendental nature, it also never departs from experience and history. In the scope of such rationality, there can be no separation between “the Way of Humans” and “the Way of Heaven.” They are both the same, and besides, it is the “Way of Humans” that generates the evolvement to higher stages. (This implies that the development does not proceed from Heaven toward the humans, but in the opposite direction.)

理性只是工具，“實用理性”以服務人類生存為最終目的，它不但沒有超越性，而且不脫離經驗和歷史。它認為沒有與“人道”分離的“天道”，“天道”與“人道”一致，而且是“人道”的提升（不是由天而人，而是由人而天）。

LI ZEHOU 2016, 157

On the other hand, pragmatic reason is a part of human universal necessity, because human mind—an objective factor of that which makes us human—is rooted in natural biological instincts, which accumulated and were shaped through history (regarding humankind as a whole) and education (for the individual), respectively. Hence, it is also an outcome of rationalization. Such a process includes the condensation of reason, which is tightly linked to the shaping of moral consciousness and free will.

Li explains that according to his theory, human reason originally generated out of the making and using of tools in communities; he simultaneously proceeds from two well-known ancient definitions of humans: “humans are rational animals” and “humans are animals that create tools.” For him, these two definitions are tightly linked to one another. Hence, his return to and his modification of Kant’s rationalism shows, on the one hand, that reason is a significant element of humanness, while on the other, it clearly shows that the notion of pragmatic reason cannot be seen as one that pertains to inherent and a-priori mental structures.

When I interpreted Kant in the past, I talked about “objective sociality.” Now, I can confirm that it is an empirical rationality. The notion of pragmatic reason is a philosophical epitome of such “empirical rationality.” One of the chief characteristics of Chinese philosophy and culture is that it denies the existence of a-priori reason and it does not raise reason to the highest position.

以前我闡述康德時，我講過“客觀社會性”，現在我明確它即是經驗合理性，

實用理性正是這種“經驗合理性”的哲學概括。中國哲學和文化特徵之一，

是不承認先驗理性，不把理性擺在最高位置。

LI ZEHOU 2016, 157

In his view, pragmatic reason is rather something modifiable and moldable that not only preserves but also develops humanity. It arises from practical initiatives and from practices that are based upon initiatives. It is a kind of empirical

reasonableness that does not rely on any kind of transcendental formulas but rather on the mere fact of human life, from which it arises and evolves, continuously discovering and accumulating new experiences (ibid., 163).

Li's understanding of the pragmatic reason is comparable to the approaches of the second period of Confucianism, which took place during the Han period and in which the more rationalistic tradition was in the forefront. In his book *On Ancient Chinese Intellectual History* (*Zhongguo gudai sixiang shilun* 中國古代思想史論), Li points out that in this second period, Confucian philosophy transformed the structural pattern *li* 理 (which can, to a certain degree, be compared to the Western notion of reason) from the previously cosmologic concept to one that refers to human inwardness, which is permeated with ethical connotations (Li Zehou 1985a, 220–222). In the third period of Confucianism (during the Neo-Confucianism of the Song period) this concept was further modified, particularly by Zhu Xi 朱熹, the main representative of this school of thought. At first glance, Zhu Xi's understanding of *li* 理, according to which it is inherent in every object of the factual world, stands in sharp contrast with Li's belief that reason is something that is impeded by or applied to objects from outside.

However, recent research in its semantic development showed that in the post-Han era, *li* 理 was gradually understood as the mutually compatible, dynamic structure of the external word and the mind (Rošker 2012, 8). In the scope of Neo-Confucianism, the notion *li* 理 was seen as both a particular structural pattern as well as the all-embracing, overall structure determining the universe. Cheng Hao 程顥, for instance, had argued that “the basic structure of each single thing is also the basic structure of everything that exists” (一物之理即萬物之理) (Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi 1981, 1, Yi shu, 13).

Hence, Li points out that the moral foundations of human mind originated from progressive internalization of rationality, which was imposed onto human mind from outside, through rites and codes of ethical regulations (Li Zehou 1980, 85) and that being a result of this continuous process, pragmatic reason was never an unchangeable, fixed, or purely abstract entity. Rather, it must be seen as a flexible and dynamic formation that allows humans to adapt to and to regulate issues connected to historically different circumstances and requirements. Against such background, it is even easier to understand the question that will be analyzed in the next section, namely, why and in which way pragmatic reason could include a functional combination of emotion (*qing*) and rationality.

As we will see, such an amalgamation of reason and emotions in the scope of pragmatic reason—in contrast to various religious approaches—is possible without the help of any outward dogmas. This fundamental characteristic

enables pragmatic reason to permit (and even encourage) people to be open to new insights and new things. In this way, pragmatic rationality inspires people to adopt historical experiences and adjust them in such a way that they could best serve the requirements of their concrete societies. In this context, Li points to the destiny of science and technology in China. Even though the dominant intellectual history never established abstract foundations of scientific thought to any significant extent, the Chinese people nevertheless rapidly (and most capably) embraced all these methods of thought as soon as they came to understand their pragmatic value after Western thought was introduced to China:

Due to “pragmatic reason,” technology developed very rapidly in ancient China. But on the other hand, I was never able to produce a system of mathematical axioms or an abstract speculative philosophy like those that were developed in ancient Greece. Hence, in the modern times, it was confronted with enormous challenges. But precisely due to its pragmatic nature, it began effectively to accept and assimilate them as soon as it became clear that abstract reasoning and scientific methods are beneficiary to people.

“實用理性”使古代中國的技藝非常發達，但始終沒能產生古希臘的數學公理系統和抽象思辨的哲學，所以，它在現代遇到了巨大的挑戰。但也因為它的實用性格，當它發現抽象思辨和科學系統有益於人的時候，便注意自己文化的弱點而努力去接受和吸取。

LI ZEHOU 2016, 157

Accordingly, pragmatic reason is a most suitable tool for a reasonable human development:

Representing the structural principle of the cultural psychological activities of the Chinese people, pragmatic reason is by no means a static, unchangeable formation. What it values is precisely the change, expansion, renewal, and development. Hence, Chinese tradition, Confucianism, and pragmatic reason cannot be seen as obstacles to modernization.

實用理性作為中國人文化心理活動的結構原則，並非靜止的、一成不變的形式，它重視的正是變化、擴展、更新和發展。從而，中國傳統、儒學和實用理性不會對現代化構成障礙。

LI ZEHOU 2008, 251–252

Li firmly believes that within the contemporary antirational trend China should certainly put forth the reconstruction of rationality, but not one that is based on transcendental reason (Li, Zehou 2016, 1143). Instead, it should rather revive and employ the elementary potencies of traditional pragmatic rationality.

Therefore, Li's anthropo-historical ontology rejects post-modernism and promotes a re-establishment of the authority of pragmatic reason. It highlights that the traditional Chinese culture of pleasure discards nihilism. Instead, it encourages the belief in human life. Li Zehou argues that a creative transformation of such Chinese cultural characteristics could obtain universality and serve as new universal ideals. As Wang, Keping (2018, 225) notes, Li has been preoccupied with both the human condition in general and China's reality in particular. "Hence, through his interpretation of pragmatic reason, Li has attempted to work out a concise but strategic blueprint to address socio-cultural issues and the possibility of human 'becoming' in both Chinese and global contexts" (Ames and Jia 2018, 14).

2 The Emotio-Rational Structure and the Fusion of Reason and Emotions

As we have seen in the previous section, Li Zehou believes that Chinese philosophy, as a one-world discourse, never rigorously separated reason from emotion (Li Zehou 2008, 248), for in its elementary framework the two are mutually combined and cannot function self-sufficiently in a pure form. Although Li sees human beings as "rational animals," he emphasizes that our rational abilities are not divided from our animal origins (Lynch 2016, 714). In his system, human mind is ordered in accord with the emotio-rational structure (*qingli jiegou* 情理結構), where reason is incorporated into and combined with animal sensibility. The emotio-rational structure denotes the specific interrelation of reason and emotion in which they intermingle with one another in vibrant, constantly changing associations of different ratios and on different levels. It is a "deep structure" (*shenceng jiegou* 深層結構) of human mind that is especially typical for Chinese people, for it was strongly shaped through traditional Chinese teachings, and is embedded in the Chinese "cultural-psychological formation" (*wenhua-xinli jiegou* 文化—心理結構). In the process of its creation, Confucianism played a prominent role:

Confucianism cannot be reduced to pure speculative philosophical deductions, nor to an attitude of pure emotional faith; therefore, it has the potential of a religious morality but also includes rational approaches

that are based upon respecting experiences. All this is comprised in this cultural-psychological formation, in which emotions are fused with and permeated by reason.¹¹

儒學既不是純思辯的哲學推斷，也不是純情感的信仰態度；它之所以具有宗教性的道德功能，又有尊重經驗的理性態度，都在於這種情理互滲交融的文化心理的建構

LI ZEHOU 2010a, 10

Li exposes the coherent and balanced nature of this formation. His theory of the emotio-rational structure represents a creative combination of Kantian and Confucian philosophy. As Jia Jinhua notes (2016, 757): “Li admires Kant’s rational ontology of ethics, but criticizes his exclusion of human emotion and desire.” She also observes that in the dominant course of traditional Western philosophy, reason and emotion were mostly understood as being in mutual opposition or even in contradiction. However, in recent years, this presupposition has been criticized by numerous sociologists, psychologists, and philosophers who maintain that reason cannot be entirely disconnected from emotions and that emotions are not always purely subjective or private. On the contrary, emotions often play a decisive and crucial role within cognitive judgements and rational discriminations. Such contemporary discourses mainly proceed from the idea of an emotional-rational continuum, which has a remarkable resemblance to Li’s emotio-rational structure. Jia (2016, 758) additionally points out that “Li Zehou’s study of the Confucian ethics of emotion started in the early 1980s and his theses of emotion-based substance and emotio-rational structure provide pioneering contributions to this new intellectual trend.” Li himself also often exposes that contemporary neuroscience likewise points toward the idea of the existence of an emotio-rational structure.

Li argues that the idea of the amalgamation and mutual interaction of reason and emotions, which takes place in the human emotio-rational structure, belongs to crucial methodological differences between transcendental and pragmatic reason. The latter is not limited to a direct and universal imposing abstract rational principles on particular objects. In Li’s view, such a universal

11 Li also points out (1980, 85) that Confucius played a crucial role in developing the emotio-rational structure of the people in his times away from the worship of external deities to interhuman emotional bounding that was rooted in kinship relations. Several crucial elements of religions (e.g., feelings and rituality) were thus smelted and incorporated into the all-embracing, unified system of sacral ethics and everyday psychology. This meant—*inter alia*—that there was no need to establish any other institutions of theological faith (Rošker 2019, 148).

application of abstract reason is methodologically superficial and unrealistic (Li, Zehou 2016, 1079).

As we have seen, Li's theory emphasizes the importance of historical specificities. In the scope of pragmatic reason, which includes ratio and emotions, human actions are carried out in accordance with *du* (度), which can be understood as a specifically Chinese, dynamic type of something similar to the Western concept of "proper measure."¹² This criterion conforms to reason as well as emotions. Even though in the domain of the emotio-rational structure, reason is of primary importance, it is still not the sole and absolute driving force of ethical behavior. Therefore, pragmatic reason never relies on absolute normative standards of right and wrong. Ritual regulations are namely based on collective emotionality, which arises (as a shared reaction) from joint circumstances of social life and represents a foundation for inter-human harmony. In contrast to such high evaluation of emotion as an auxiliary force for generating harmony, which is seen as a most precious ideal in traditional Chinese philosophical discourses, the traditional Western ideal of justice grants absolute value merely to reason (Li Zehou and Liu Yuedi 2014, 195).

In such a traditional Chinese resolution of the dichotomy of reason and emotions, we can notice another difference between some fundamental approaches of Li's ethics on the one side, and Kant's deontology on the other. While Li is more concerned about the constitutive conditions of humankind as whole, Kant is more apprehensive about the cultivation of humans purely as moral beings, for his practical reason is interacting not only with his

12 This similarity, however, is only superficial, for Li's notion certainly differs from most of the prevailing understandings of the (proper) measure in the history of Western thought, from Aristotle to Hegel. While the "golden mean" as developed by the first of these (see Aristoteles 1972, 89–92) was a measure normatively determining the required middle between two extremes, one of excess and the other of insufficiency, it was defined as a correlation of measures which constitute the quality of things in Hegel's *Science of Logic* (*Wissenschaft der Logik*). Even though Hegel's measure is a processual notion, for correlations necessarily change with time and space, it still can (and needs to) be seized quantitatively as an isolated entity of quality (Carlson 2003, 131). Hence, in both cases, measure is a static and consistent determination of existence. In this context, Li also reproached Hegel with placing quality in a primary position, i.e. before quantity (Li Zehou 2016, 168). Li's proper measure, however, has nothing to do with the criteria of quantity or quality (*ibid.*, 161). It is rather a dynamic and constantly modifying form of equilibrium, which continuously changes in accordance with everlasting alterations of subsistence. It not only comprises both the abovementioned connotations of the concept of measure (i.e. that of the "middle" and that of the "correlation"), but can furthermore function as a verb expressing the very process of proper measurement. Hence, Li's term *du* can be translated in both nominalized and verbal forms, i.e. as the proper measure, and as the shaping or grasping of proper measure.

conception of categorical imperative, but also with his theo-ethical awareness of the highest good (Wang 2018, 245). In contrast to such an approach, the fusion of reason and emotion, which constitute pragmatic reason, was not a product of any transcendental force, but rather a result of education. Li writes:

This is why I say that the “emotio-rational structure” was not shaped by a mysterious “Heaven,” nor by an a priori “Goodness.” It arose out of a concrete down-to-earth “learning.”

所以我說，不是神秘的“天”，也非先驗的“善”，而是腳踏實地的“學”，塑建出人的“情理結構”。

LI ZEHOU AND LIU YUEDI 2014b, 20

Regarding the wider connotations of this fusion of reason with emotion, Gu Mingdong points to another aspect of Li Zehou's theory. According to Li, Confucius' pragmatic reasoning is—inter alia—also connected to artistic emotions, and hence, it allows the establishment of a direct relation to the Chinese aesthetics:

It is filled with emotional qualities of poetry. Indeed, the Confucian system of teachings admonishes people to live not only morally and ethically but also poetically and artistically. In this sense, Confucius' way of reasoning easily reminds us of the way Heidegger in the latter half of his career conducted poetic investigations of philosophical issues.

GU 2018, 77

A good example of such a fusion of reason and emotion can be found, for instance, in Mencius when he talks about the “distinguishing heart-mind (*shi-feizhi xin* 是非之心).”¹³ Such an attitude shows rational judgment and clearly differentiates between right and wrong, but at the same time, it also includes an emotional approach defined by love and hate. It is hence both emotional as well as rational.

Li sees a strong link between emotions and reason that needs to be cultivated so that they can promote each other's development. This is how the human psyche, or emotional-rational structures, are advanced, both in the individual and for society as a whole.

D'AMBROSIO 2016, 732

13 See *Mengzi* s.d., Gongsun Chou 1: 6 and Tang Wen Gong 11: 13.

However, he also repeatedly emphasizes that in this amalgamation, reason is the primary, dominant, and more important element. It provides regulatory guidelines for human interactions and channels natural emotions as they become cultivated through habitual practice until they become part of the person's actual psychological structure (*ibid.*, 728).

Li often emphasizes that individuals follow morality only when reason rather than emotion is in control over their moral psychological structure. He points out that reason must under no circumstances become a slave to emotions, and highlights that "Reason is the impetus of morality, while emotions are merely helping hands" (Li, Zehou 2018, 27).

As we have seen in previous chapters, Li Zehou sees the basic emotio-rational structure of human mind as defined by the will and concepts on the one hand, and emotions on the other. The former two belong to the realm of reason, in which the will represents its form while the concepts constitute its content. Similar to all other specific components of human mental formations, this elementary construction has also been shaped in the long-lasting process of historical sedimentation. Even in the framework of pragmatic reason, it is still absolute (in the sense that it is what makes human beings human) and can hence be compared to Kant's categorical imperative. Although Li Zehou has often criticized Kant for focusing exclusively on rational elements without considering the vital role of human emotions, he still lays stress on the important function of reason, and especially that of the free will,¹⁴ which, in his view, also belongs to constitutive elements of traditional Confucian ethics:

In China, we say, "virtue is established at the highest level." This kind of uniqueness of each individual existence shows here its incomparable

14 The categorical imperative and the free will, which represent the first and the third principles of Kant's deontological ethics, have always represented crucial parts of that which makes human beings human. Thus, Li sees them as universal necessities, which are rooted in objective sociality and possess an absolute nature. However, he emphasizes that Kant's second principle, namely the notion of human beings as ends in themselves, is a product of its time, defined by different contents of particular historical actualities. Hence, this second principle is not of an absolute nature, but rather represents a part of social morality, a result of historical social development reaching a specific stage. On the one side, he thus confirms the existence of absolute moral formations that are a part of humanness and as such, comparable to (though not identical with) Kant's a-priori notions. On the other, he disagrees with Kant regarding the essential nature of his second principle but simultaneously points out that contemporary China could benefit from incorporating Kant's idea that "humans should be treated as ends" into its moral mentality (D'Ambrosio 2016, 725).

brilliance. Such existence can only become possible through conscious and self-aware rational construction, which takes place in the framework of constructing subjectivity. This construction implies practice, behavior, and action, but also emotions, desires, and other sensations, which agglomerate in human reason (similar as in epistemology, in which reason is internalized into sensuous intuition). This is the real free will.

中國古話說，「太上立德」，個體存在的這種一次性，這這裏顯示出它的無比光輝。而這卻只有通過人的自覺有意識的理性建構才存在。這屬於建立人的主體性的範圍。這是在人的實踐、行為、活動、情感、願欲等感性中的理性凝聚（如同在認識論的感性直觀中有理性內化一樣），這才是真正的自由意志。

LI ZEHOU 1994, 469

In the central Confucian endeavor of “shaping and constructing human emotions and sensitivity” (Li Zehou 2014a, 3) they are bit by bit cultivated by (proper) music and rituals until they became the norm. This made the incorporation of reason into emotions possible. Confucianism has emphasized that “pleasure derived from music” (*yezhe yue ye* 樂者樂也) (*Li ji* s.d., Yue ji: 32), but they also considered the need to regulate this pleasure (i.e., to control the emotions involved). This could be accomplished through proper (that is, reasonable) regulation of music and rituals¹⁵ (*ibid.*, 9). Li exposes that for the Confucians, people can “find pleasure in regulated rites and music” (*le jie liyue* 樂節禮樂) (*Lunyu* s.d., Ji shi: 690). Through such proper, sensitive regulation, people’s natural emotions were molded into a rational form, and this allowed for a fusion of emotion and reason (Li Zehou 2008, 251).

Besides the integration of reason into emotions, Confucianism also stressed the assimilation of emotions into reason. In the ancient Chinese worldview, nature, heaven, and earth were permeated with positive feelings that affirmed the value, the goodness, and the beauty of life. In its very essence, this attitude was by no means scientific, nor cognitive or philosophical, but purely emotional and aesthetic. Therefore, Confucianism is much more than merely ethical teaching. Although it cannot be regarded as a religion, it still far surpassed the scope of ethical regulations and thereby achieved the highest realm of the unity of heaven (nature) and humans, which is comparable to a religious experience. According to Li, this is the realm of the aesthetic.

15 The chapter *On Music* (*Yue ji* 樂記) of the *Confucian Book of Rites* (*Li ji* 禮記) contains the following passage: “This is why the ancient kings instituted their ceremonies and music and regulated them by the consideration of human needs” (是故先王之制禮樂，人為之節) (*Li ji* s.d., Yue ji: 476).

However, in both cases, the pairing of emotions and reason “reflects the idea that advancements in one area are echoed in the other, and they feed off of one another in a symbiotic relationship.”

D'AMBROSIO 2016, 728

In Confucianism, emotions were not linked to any external objects of worship or to any transcendent, supernatural realm. In this unification of reason and emotion, which is embedded into the emotio-rational structure, people are hence never separated from their actual relationships. According to Li, it therefore also represents a foundation of the specific social system defined by relationalism (*guanxizhuyi* 關係主義). This social system “allows emotion to permeate in interpersonal relations with the sincere emotion of parent-child love as the root, substance, and foundation” (Jia 2018, 156). Thus it is not a coincidence that in traditional China, families were linked to the state through the ideal of a good citizen; in Confucian ethics, a good citizen first had to be a good family member. The core idea behind such an outlook is that regulating the relationships in one's own family is what leads to a well-ordered state. Here, we could refer to the well-known but controversial story from the Confucian *Analects*, in which Confucius exposes the primary importance of emotional attachment between family members:

The Duke of She recounted to Confucius, “In our society we have truly upright people: if their father had stolen a sheep, they will bear witness to the fact.” Confucius replied, “In our society we understand uprightness in a different way. Sons cover for their fathers and vice versa. For us, such an attitude is upright.”¹⁶

16 Such an attitude also emphasizes the emotio-rational structure. Even though numerous scholars warn against it, for it could lead to corruption and to the compromising of the legal order, we must not forget that the opposite approach has repeatedly led to tragedies. During China's Cultural Revolution, for instance, people were often forced to denounce their relatives or to “draw a clear line between themselves and their (‘reactionary’) families” in order to prove their loyalty to the political system. For a profound analysis of the controversies linked to the issue, see Huang 2017. In Huang Yong's own interpretation, the hiding of a father's wrongdoings is not the goal but a means, the purpose of which is to change the father into a moral person through persuasion instead of punishment (Huang 2017, 41). For a different (or additional) understanding of this question, see Tseng 2017. He explains: “Law’ is in fact merely a principle of recognizing a person's identity as a member of civil society, and we cannot ignore that man also has an identity of the ‘family’ relation that is connected to ‘love.’ The identity recognition based on the principle of ‘love’ is an intrinsic need of humans, and also an essential link in the establishment of an integrated personality. The desire to cover up for a family member is nothing other than an attempt to rebuild an ethics-centered identity recognition, so as to avoid the materialization of humans by ‘laws’” (Tseng 2017, 47).

葉公語孔子曰：「吾黨有直躬者，其父攘羊，而子證之。」孔子曰：「吾黨之直者異於是。父為子隱，子為父隱，直在其中矣」。

Lunyu s.d., Zi Lu: 18

Li claims that such relationality (primarily between parents and children) and the emotio-rational structure of relationships belong to the crucial topics of the *Analects*. They are seen as much more important as the public reason alone. In his view (Li, Zehou 2016, 1094), Mencius, who emphasized that compassionate governance arises from compassionate hearts and highlights the importance of sincerity (emotional concordance) in moral action, also proceeded from similar ideas.

In this system, the emotio-rational structure also provides a basis for harmony, which, according to Li, has a higher value than justice that is based exclusively on reason without taking into account human emotions. The effects of the emotio-rational structure manifest themselves in human culture and society through a different kind of regulation, a kind of dynamically balanced “justice,” which considers concrete circumstances and emotions. Li advocates such effects of the emotio-rational structure by arguing that they might correct the liberalist notion of public reason, especially its overemphasis on formal and procedural justice, the atomic individual, and absolute free choice (Li, Zehou 2016, 1130).

As we have seen in the beginning of this section, the focus on the integration of emotion and reason rather than mere reason constitutes a specific feature of the pragmatic reason and reveals the methodological gap between this kind of traditional Chinese reasonableness and the rationality represented by transcendental reason. Therefore, the relation between reason and emotion is also the philosophical foundation for understanding the crucial differences between traditional Chinese and traditional Western ethics:

Humans are still animals, not gods, and cannot completely rid themselves of desires, which is why we have the question of the emotio-rational structure. Aristotle and many other Western philosophers such as David Hume give various distinctions and descriptions regarding how emotions and desires are separate and what it is like to experience them, but they do not get at the root of the issue in their discussions. In contrast, classical Confucian works have stressed the emotio-rational structure from the outset and indeed took it as their starting point.

LI, ZEHOU 2016, 1069

In Li's view, this psychological structure should also be taken into account in contemporary societies, which are defined by a surplus of artificial desires:

Traditional Chinese philosophy ... views humans as rational while also recognizing them as organisms with instinctual animal desires and natural needs. We cannot simply write off these important factors through rational moral concepts. The market economies we see today open this Pandora's Box of instinctual desires. They effectively satisfy as well as produce various desires in people, even to the point of creating an overflow of materialistic desire. We cannot adequately resolve this issue by engaging only rational principles and moral laws and failing to discuss the emotio-rational structure.

ibid., 1071

On the other hand, Li also highlights the insufficiencies and dangers of a complete amalgamation of reason and emotions, in which reason does not maintain its primary and dominant role. He points out that in its rigid form, such a blending became an impediment for the balanced evolvement of traditional Chinese society:

Due to the fact that the emotio-rational structure, which was rooted in the "one-world-view," never produced a strict borderline between emotion and cognition, the instrumental and axiological reason were fused together and formed a single, unified entity that could not lead to a development of modern science and democracy.

由於“一個世界”的情理結構使情感與理知沒有清楚劃分，工具理性與價值理性混為一體，也就開不出現代的科學與民主。

LI ZEHOU 2010a, 10

Li's opinion was that in spite of the importance and all positive potentialities of the emotio-rational structure, it was also extremely important not to confuse it with a blurring of the dividing line between reason and emotion in the sphere of political philosophy. In this context, he also highlights the need for contemporary China to enact and adhere to a strict division between state and religion. According to him, this is important in order to deconstruct the traditional trinity of politics, ethics, and religion, because in his view, this "trinity" is nothing but the traditional "rule of one man" (Li Zehou and Liu Xuyuan 2012, 16).

Such relicts of traditional Chinese religious morality can lead to favoritism and even to the despotism of so-called human feelings (*ren qing* 人情), a notion that is still often used to cover up private interests or a greedy desire for power. The Chinese people must not allow these distortions or negative aspects of their own tradition to destroy the legal system (ibid.).

Therefore, the Confucian emotio-rational structure has to be adjusted in a way that could meet the requirements of the modern era. Here, the role of individual autonomy is of utmost importance. In Li's view, the Confucian veneration for the humanness (*ren xing* 人性) must be linked to a profound respect for the individual.

Confucianism always regarded humanness as a foundation. Regardless of the particular field on which Confucianism was elaborating, no matter whether it spoke of ethics, politics, or religion, humanness was always of major importance. It was the crucial point of "rituality" and also of "humaneness," and it was the main concern of both Mencius and Xunzi. Humanness, however, is always directly linked to individual psychological sensitivity. Thus, the emotio-rational structure can only be established on such grounds.

儒學向以人性為根本，講倫理、政治、宗教或統攝或歸結為人性問題。不管是“禮”是“仁”，是孟是荀，人性問題始終乃關鍵所在。人性與個體的感性心理直接關聯，由此才可能產生情理結構的建造。

LI ZEHOU 2010a, 10

Li sees such a modified structure as a possible foundation of his own version of "liberalism" (ibid., 12), which could be achieved through a modernized revival of Chinese tradition:

Based on the promotion of modern ideas and aiming to construct a new, future humanness, we can gradually, through education, preserve and modify deep levels of traditional emotio-rational structure.

以宣傳現代觀念為根本，以建立未來的人性為鵠的，通過教育，來逐漸既保存又改換傳統的情理深層結構。

ibid.

In this context, it is also important to note that Li Zehou has always criticized anti-rational and anti-enlightenment thought, constantly supporting and promoting ideals of reason. He also claims, on the other hand, that people should not stop at this point, but rather advance beyond it. The enlightenment movement has brought about numerous significant ideas and ideals, which became an indispensable foundation of modern progressive societies. But ultimately, the enlightenment movement is only a particular stage in the evolution of humankind. It reopens many new, equally (or even more) important questions,

as for instance those regarding the method by which the emotio-rational structure, with its connection of reason, emotions and desires, produces humanness and human mind. He emphasizes:

Postmodern anti-rationalism is destructive, whereas I put forth “emotion as substance” and “the emotio-rational structure” as a constructive way of discussing human psychology and human nature. These ideas draw on Chinese tradition and have universal significance. And I hope that these ideas and the practical development of modern China will intersect, cooperate, and mutually influence one another.

LI, ZEHOU 2016, 1074

In the evolution of humankind, the shaping of the emotio-rational structure took place as a part of the process of the humanization of nature (*ziran de renhua* 自然的人化). Because Li Zehou is mainly interested in the internal aspects of this humanization, he also emphasizes those aspects of the emotio-rational structure, which manifest themselves in the core inner features of humanness as the harmonious concord of emotions with rational conceptions of good and evil, as well as with the free will and other human capacities.¹⁷ Therefore, the emotio-rational structure is a formation of moral psychology. In this sense, it is absolute: unlike the social contents of ethics, which necessarily change with time, this structure is not subject to any substantial modifications. Li understands humanness (*ren xing* 人性) as referring to the cultural-psychological formation that is particular to human beings and not shared by animals (Li, Zehou 2018, 22). This means that in individuals, it manifests itself in the emotio-rational structure. It is developed and cultivated in the process of cultural sedimentation, but in principle, it belongs to formations that are already shaped on its lowest, widest and most general level, which Li calls “the sedimentation of species (*wuzhong jidian* 物種積澱).” The difference between this human mental formation and emotions, which are observed in certain animals is, that in the emotio-rational structure, there is also a rational element, yet this rational element is distinct from mechanical rationality.

Regarding the concrete individuals, these formations include innate (e.g., physiological) and acquired (e.g., cultural) differences. This means

17 Jia Jinhua (2018, 179) described the differentiation between the external and the internal aspects of the emotio-rational structure in the following way. “Externally, the emotio-rational structure presents as emotion’s permeation of the modern system of democracy, freedom, and regulation of various forms of public reason; internally, it manifests as a resonant balance of emotions, desires, intentions, humanity, sense of duty and obligation, and concept of right and wrong.”

that the emotio-rational structure sedimented in each individual mind cannot be the same. Here, we must not forget that in Li's view, sedimentation is an ongoing progression, formation, and process: "It is precisely the individual differences of sedimentation, which create the potential for a breakthrough and change in the original sedimentation. It is surely the different emotio-rational structure of individuals, that gives a person creativity" (Li, Zehou 2018, 25).

Human emotio-rational structure can offer us methods for establishing and developing a well-balanced psychology in order to proliferate social harmony and the cultivation of individual emotions and thus, to achieve "good life" or "common good" (Li, Zehou 2016, 1138). Li Zehou is convinced that replacing one-dimensional views of reason as the only supreme force with the more complex emotio-rational structure could provide us with new, modern, and universalizing means of harmonizing morality and ethics, inner cultivation and social norms, individuals and society, as well as private and political realms. In other words, the emotio-rational structure could show us the "new way of the inner sage and external ruler." Hence, Li developed his theory of emotio-rational structure, which is based upon traditional Chinese thought, as a possible inspiration for and contribution to the construction of new moralities not only for contemporary China, but also for the humankind. His fruitful and creative combinations of Confucian ethics with Kantian rationality aim to develop this theory further. Through his creative transformation and integration with various modern forms of public reason Li hopes that the Confucian ethics of valuing human existence could become a general ideal and a universal value that "contribute to the remedy of the critical conditions of contemporary times and the new construction of humanity and world cultural order" (Jia 2018, 179).

3 Emotion-Based Substance

Characteristic of Chinese tradition, the "emotio-rational structure" belongs to the most significant and central theoretical models constituting Li's philosophy in general and his ethical thought in particular. The concept of *qing* 情, which is central to this model, is also a key component of another important notion of Li's system, one which underlies the specific development of Chinese culture. This is the notion of the so-called emotion-based substance

(*qing benti* 情本體).¹⁸ Because both terms emphasize the significance of emotions, some scholars have difficulties to clearly differentiate between them (see for instance Li Zehou 2014, 3). Li defined the difference between the two concepts in the following way:

They are by no means the same. Their focus is completely different. “Emotion-based substance” refers to that which people regard as the basic value and position. “Structure,” on the other hand, refers to the concrete interweaving of this (emotion) with “reason.” It transmits various types of relations, proportions and dynamic changes of “emotion and reason” that manifest themselves in the complexity of humanness.

不同一，著重有所不同。“情本體”是就它對人是有根本價值、地位而言。“結構”是就它與“理性”具體交織而言，突出的是“情理”關係的各種不同比例、比重和變動不居，這也就是複雜的人性。

ibid.

Li uses the concept to demonstrate how emotions are fundamentally constitutive of human psychology and thus of actual human existence on individual as well as communal level (D'Ambrosio et al. 2016, 1061).¹⁹ Emotion-based substance represents the most basic features defining the human mind, for

18 The term “emotion” in the phrase “emotion-based substance” is expressed by the term *qing* 情, which is, as we have already seen, not merely limited to emotions in the sense of feelings (*qinggan* 情感), but also includes the sensitive realms of different situations and various atmospheres (*qingjing* 情境) or contexts. Because it also contains the aforementioned situational connotations, it would be in principle possible to denote this elementary substance as a “situation-based substance.” However, such connotations of the term *qing* mainly pertain to the human emotional reactions to particular situations or to the sentiments and atmospheres of these situations. In other words, the linking between emotional and situational connotations of the word can be described in terms of the fact that even in Western discourses (see for instance Hatzimoyssis 2009, 215), emotional experience is an opening to the salient features of a situation. Therefore, the term “emotion” still seems to be a more appropriate translation of the character *qing*, for in this wider sense, it covers both meanings better.

19 When explaining his *General Scheme of Ethics* (see Li, Zehou 2016, 1079), Li also pointed out that the emotion-based substance does not mean that people's decisions or their moral behavior as such would be guided by emotions. In the individual moral formations, the rational will is the motivational driving force, whereas emotion only plays an assistive role. Therefore, it is not reason that complements emotion (as was claimed, for instance, by Qian Mu) but the opposite way round: emotions are complementing the reason. However, it is precisely this guiding role of reason in individual structure that makes a reflection (or expression) of collective emotionality possible.

it is something that surpasses the narrow and limited realm of experience (see Liu Zaifu 2016, 2). For Li Zehou, the concept was important especially because human emotions possess the ability to engage with reality in a very direct but simultaneously very profound way. Undergoing an emotion is a way in which the world manifests itself to us (Hatzimoysis 2009, 215). This basic nature of emotion and sensitivity is that which makes them crucial for a philosophical analysis of the way, in which human beings perceive their life and especially in which they—consequently—interact with other people. Hence, questions regarding the sensual, emotion-based perception (or experience) of the relationships in which we live are important ethical questions per se. Therefore, Li Zehou's concept of the emotion-based substance is not only fundamental for his general theory of anthropo-historical ontology, but also for his ethics.

As we have seen in the previous chapters, Li Zehou established his theory upon a double ontology, which is composed of the techno-social (or instrumental) substance (*gongju bentu* 工具本體) on the one side, and the psychological substance (*xinli bentu* 心理本體) on the other. In the Chinese tradition, the core element of the former is “*du*” while the crucial part of the latter is “*qing*” in the sense of emotional responsiveness (Li Zehou 2012c, 72). Hence, the emotion-based substance is typical of the Chinese culture; it was shaped on the corresponding cultural level of sedimentation (*wenhua jidian* 文化積澱) and represents a major element of China's traditional religious morality.

Although Li mentioned the concept of emotion-based substance several times in his early works (see Li Zehou and Liu Xuyuan 2011, 9), he provided an integral theoretical explanation of this notion for the first time in his book *Pragmatic Reason and a Culture of Optimism* (*Shiyong lixing yu legan wenhua* 實用理性與樂感文化). Emotion-based substance is the core concept, necessary for the understanding of Li's idea of the specifically Chinese culture of pleasure. He uses the term substance (*bentu*) not in the sense of a *noumenon* that is different and separated from the sphere of phenomena, but simply as the “basis” (*genben* 根本), the “root” (*bengen* 本根), or the “ultimate reality” (*zui hou shizai* 最後實在) of everything actually existing in the material world.²⁰ This means that emotion, which occurs in the empirical world

20 Hence, in order to avoid culturally conditioned misunderstandings, I often (wherever possible) translate it with the term “substantial root” as for instance in the phrase *lunli bentu* 倫理本體 (the substantial root of ethics). However, this does not apply to those words and phrases from Li Zehou's philosophy that are already well established through the many translations and interpretations of his work, as for instance *qing bentu* 情本體 (emotion-based substance), *xinli bentu* 心理本體 (psychological substance), *bentu jiazhi* 本體價值 (ontological value), and so on.

(Li Zehou and Liu Xuyuan 2011a, 27) is the basic ontological ground of all human life (Li Zehou 2008, 54):

The so-called substance is the ultimate reality, which cannot be further questioned regarding the meaning of its existence. It surpasses the empirical causalities. That, which exceeds the substance of psychology, is god or a spirit. That, which departs from the psychology of substance, is science or a machine. Therefore, the ultimate and genuine substance is actually nothing else but the structure of human sensibility.

所謂本體即是不能問其存在意義的最後實在，它是對經驗因果的超越。離開了心理的本體是上帝，是神；離開了本體的心理是科學，是機器。所以最後的本體實在其實就在人的感性結構中。

LI ZEHOU AND LIU XUYUAN 2011b, 54

Because it includes the situational connotation, emotion-based substance is by no means a firmly established, static normative system. Rather, it represents an open structure, which causes human beings with their vital sedimentations to continuously confront new aspects of their life. They can always encounter new uncertainties and it is precisely this coincidental nature of human life that creates the universal and necessary laws of history (*ibid.*). Therefore, the substance of our life lies in our actual experiences, which continuously give rise to our emotions and unconsciously shape our values. They are inevitably linked to and shared by our fellow people but at the same time, they are the most intimate quintessence of our inwardness. Due to the ontological structure of emotion, the world always matters to us in one way or another, and in this sense, emotion is one of our primary ways of experiencing what actually matters and for which reasons. Li writes:

Perhaps this is the reason why people can overcome death and conquer their worries, troubles, and fears. Only in this way can we experience the ultimate principle that is hidden in our everyday relationships beyond the moral imperatives, without a transcendent god, devoid of all estranged spirits or immovable rational models. We can find it in the warmth of our human interactions, in the joy of springtime. Only in this way can we experience that which is spirit and matter, existence and meaning at the same time. This is the real essence of human life. We taste, cherish, and look back on all these coincidences, mourning our losses and enjoying life, including all absurdness it brings about. We treasure the sensitivity of our existence and thereby do we obtain a genuine

understanding of our life. Human beings are not machines, and neither animals. Here, the “absence” becomes “presence.”²¹

也許只有這樣，才能戰勝死亡，克服“憂”、“煩”、“畏”。只有這樣，“道在倫常日用之中”才不是道德的律令、超越的上帝、疏離的精神、不動的理式，而是人際的溫暖、歡樂的春天。它才可能既是精神又為物質，是存在又是意識，是真正的生活、生命和人生。品味、珍惜、回首這些偶然，淒恰地歡度生的荒謬，珍重自己的情感生存，人就可以“知命”人就不是機器，不是動物“無”在這裡便生成為“有”。

ibid.

On a certain level, such a view can be compared to Heidegger's idea of emotion (see for instance Hatzimoyssis 2009). However, Li exposes that there are important differences between Heidegger's and his own understanding (Li Zehou and Liu Xuyuan 2011b, 55). According to him, Heidegger's concept denotes a kind of “blind impulses” (ibid.). Due to Heidegger's distinction between authenticity and inauthenticity, they are in fact empty. For Li Zehou, this is a big mistake and a result of the fact, that Heidegger was not able (or not willing) to surpass the “two-world view” characteristic of Western philosophy. In Chinese philosophy, on the other hand, authenticity is concealed in the inauthenticity, just as the finite is hidden in infinity.

On the other hand, Li points out that Heidegger's anti-rationalism is emotional (Li Zehou 2016b, 78) while simultaneously relying on standard rational argumentation. It is for this reason that in Li's view, Heidegger, (and not Plato or Kant), is still the most suitable Western reference for debating Chinese culture and emotion-based substance. Here, he suggests a comparison between Confucius' famous slogan, “How can you know about death if you don't know about life”²² (*Lunyu* s.d., Gong Ye Chang: 19) and Heidegger's notion, which can be summarized in the opposite question “How can you know about life

21 In the above quotation, the terms “presence” and “absence” are translations of the Chinese concepts “you 有” and “wu 無,” respectively. Traditionally, these two concepts were mostly translated in the sense of “being” and “nonbeing,” “existence” and “nonexistence,” or even as “substance” and “nothingness.” (For a detailed description and explanation of different translations and interpretations of this conceptual pair, see Hansen 2003, 847–849). However, because all these terms represent important notions defining certain crucial paradigms of Western philosophy, such translations can be misleading. Therefore, I prefer to translate them through the lens of the specific referential framework determining traditional Chinese thought (see Rošker 2019, 254ff) and from the viewpoint of their dynamic and correlative interactions regarding what can or cannot be perceived or experienced.

22 未知生，焉知死？

if you don't know about death" (Heidegger 2001, 252). Here, the Confucian idea emphasizes the importance of normal everyday life, which becomes the basis for the authenticity. Living in the world and relating to other people is a substitution for the relationship between the individual and god (Li Zehou 2016b, 79). The sacredness of this idea lies in secular life. It is here where we can find the genuine depth of substance. Indeed, the confrontation with death brings about a deep sense of unique individual identity, the awareness that one cannot be replaced, nor return to this world. In fact, even though the only possible mode of our existence is coexistence with others, each person is still a unique, irreplaceable individual, just as every passing moment is exclusive, unique, and discrete.

In addition, Li exposes that Zhu Xi's critique of Buddhism can be applied to Heidegger as well. Neither was able to explain the question of how something substantial can arise from empty nothingness or from "nonbeing." In his view, this problem can be solved by a return to the material, concrete world, to the world of human emotions, because the unity of philosophy and religion can be found in everyday life. The world is originally empty, and human beings, which are thrown into it, are also empty because their life as such is meaningless. In the end, we all have to die. In Li's view, this is what Heidegger implies when he writes that we all are going toward the realm of nothingness or nonbeing (Heidegger 1967, 431; 2001, 343). Confucian philosophy, on the other hand, finds the meaning of life in life itself. We have to appreciate every moment because there is no transcendent reality and no god beyond our actual existence.

Li believes that Heidegger's *Befindlichkeit*, feeling, and *Dasein* are still abstract, rational and universal. Furthermore, after Heidegger's idea of being-toward-death and *Angst*, people still need to live (Li Zehou 2016b, 86). Since humans live in concrete social relations and circumstances, attempting to strip away this solid and actual "presence" (*you* 有) in order to pursue an illusory "absence" (*wu* 無) is, from the perspective of the Chinese "culture of pleasure" (*legan wenhua* 樂感文化), just like "trying to catch a fish by climbing a tree" (*yuan mu qiu yu* 緣木求魚) (ibid.).

However, it is clear that once we say goodbye to the faith in external deities, abstract ideas, transcendent ultimate reality, or other supernatural entities, we find ourselves in a difficult situation bare of comfort or security. We are thrown back upon ourselves. Thus, it is important to authentically live our life, because the ultimate reality lies precisely in the sensitivity of our existence. There is no superb and mysterious substance beyond the tangible substance of our emotion (Li Zehou and Liu Xuyuan 2011b, 56). Hence, even though the emotion-based substance is no longer a metaphysical *noumenon*, it is still called substance, for it implies both the real existence and the ultimate meaning.

Although (the idea and the form of) this substance arose in the classical Chinese culture, its significance is not limited to the Chinese tradition but can also prove itself to be extremely relevant for the contemporary world. It could lead modern societies to a “second Renaissance” by helping us to overcome the mechanistic domination of technology and the alienation it brings about. In Li’s view, the awareness of the emotion-based substance can namely liberate people from the misty realms of postmodern worldviews just as the Renaissance has helped people to defeat the estrangement of mysticism.

In ancient Chinese philosophy, especially in the classical Confucian teachings, emotion-based substance was understood as the ontological foundation of existence not only regarding human life, but also in terms of the entire universe. Hence, Li advocates a return to classical Confucian ethical approaches, which interpret emotions as the foundation of morality (D’Ambrosio 2016: 720). He argues that human emotions are the starting point of the Way (*dao* 道)²³ and that they manifest themselves in ritualistic aspects of daily life (*lijie* 禮節).²⁴ Hence, in his view, the foundation of ritual and obligations lies in human emotions, not in any external realm. Here, human emotions are the root or the substance of human existence, since they are based on the innate human heart-mind (*xin* 心), which is not transcendental or a priori (in the Kantian sense), but is nevertheless surpassing the limitations of the tangible and transitory world. On the other side, however, emotions manifest themselves in daily human affairs, being so natural and self-evident that they are often not even realized. Li argues that in classical Confucianism, concepts such as sincerity, respect, affection, loyalty, trustworthiness, and empathy are doubtless seen as concrete emotional states and not as some rational concepts linked to an abstract mind (Li Zehou 2016b, 73).

Emotions are the essential binder that connects people within discrete relationships. In this way, Confucianism amounts to a moral interpretation of relationships as the fundamental constituents of human life and morality. Relationships bring about and cultivate human feelings and emotions. Through socialization and habitual practice people learn to transform their natural instincts and inclinations into virtues (*ibid.*, 727), which, in turn, must

23 Here, the notion of the Way implies the original and ultimate principle of human and cosmic reality.

24 In this context, Li Zehou claims that rituals—and through them customs and social norms—are generated by emotions (*li shengyu qing* 禮生於情). “The internalization of social norms as regulatory guidelines for interacting with others is a process of rational-emotional affirmation and identification. Norms provide a rational basis and model to channel natural emotions as they become cultivated through habitual practice until they become part of the person’s actual psychological structure” (D’Ambrosio 2016, 728).

be associated with particular relationships. According to Li Zehou, relationships are not merely rational practices or systems in society. We must not forget that they are acknowledged, accepted, sustained, and developed by emotions.

As mentioned, the idea of emotion as a root of existence or a special substance that is grounded in the tangible, phenomenal world, was shaped and developed in ancient China, especially in the scope of original Confucian teachings. In the pre-Qin era, the concept of emotion was hence highly evaluated. During the Neo-Confucian period of the Song and Ming dynasties, however, emotion (which also included intentions, wishes, and desires) was mainly seen as something negative, something that had to be wiped out.²⁵ However, gradually starting in the 17th century, and explosively culminating in the May 4th Movement (1919), emotion was “rehabilitated” since in this “Chinese enlightenment movement” wishes and desires were seen as important driving forces of scientific progress. However, the negative connotation of the term remained in existence in the advancement of the Modern or New Confucian (*xin ruxue* 新儒學) stream of thought and in moral philosophies that were created in the scope of this current, because its representatives mainly based their theories on Neo-Confucian approaches. In a longer essay entitled “The Failure of the Song and Ming Neo-Confucian Quest for Transcendentalism” (*Song Ming lixue zhuiqiu chaoyande shibai* 宋明理學追求超驗的失敗)²⁶ Li sharply criticized their views on the issue. He concludes that similar to their Neo-Confucian predecessors, Modern Confucians failed in creating an intelligible moral metaphysics because they did not pay attention to a crucial difference between the cultural-psychological formations of religious and shamanistic cultures. While the former were rooted in the realm of transcendence and interpreted human life (including its essential value) upon this foundation, the latter—which prevailed in the origins of Chinese tradition—proceeded from the concrete human condition and created human spiritual life based on its tangible physical foundations that were rooted in the concrete material world (Li Zehou 2008, 68). In his view, we therefore need to reexamine the notion of emotion-based substance as the core of Chinese philosophy and culture.

25 This tendency is especially visible in the famous Neo-Confucian phrase that advocates “the preservation of the (moral and rational) cosmic structure and the elimination of human desires” (*cun tianli mie renyu* 存天理滅人欲). However, even the Song-Ming scholars’ conception of the substance of morality does not actually include a complete denial of emotional connotations, or contents. Humaneness, for instance, has been understood as the heart-mind of the way (*dao xin* 道心), while simultaneously being thought of as having naturally developing or emotional elements.

26 As a subchapter, this essay is included in Li’s book, *Pragmatic Reason and a Culture of Optimism* (*Shiyong lixing yu legan wenhua* 實用理性與樂感文化).

In the shaping of the emotion-based substance during the course of the Chinese cultural sedimentation, the central Confucian virtue of humaneness (*ren* 仁) played a very important role. This is understandable considering the etymological meaning of the term as explained in the *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 (*Interpreting Texts and Explaining Characters*). Its author Xu Shen 許慎 (ca. 58–148) suggests the character 仁 indicated that human beings could only exist in communities with other people: thus, the original meaning implies that people depend on each other and that we therefore simply cannot afford not to love, cherish, and help each other. What the original meaning expresses, is therefore a deep feeling of mutual interpersonal empathy (see Rošker 2019, 298).

Confucianism sees humaneness as “the heart-mind of Heaven”²⁷ and emphasizes that heaven and earth, the cosmos and human society, are rooted in harmonious human relationships that are based on a shared sense of community.²⁸ Since in this way, nature and its laws were psychologized (i.e., conceived in terms of human emotions), there is no need “for a religion revolving around a personified deity, nor for the eternity and immortality of the soul that transcends the sensible world of time and space, because eternity and immortality are found within it” (Li, Zehou 1999c, 54).

Hence, Li identifies humaneness as Confucius’s crucial concept and takes it as a basic virtue covering the five abovementioned vital levels that determine traditional Chinese social system, namely the basis of blood (kinship) relations, psychological principles, humanism, ideal personality and pragmatic reason, which conducts and pervades all other, mutually intertwined, levels. Through the reciprocal interaction of these factors, Confucius used humaneness to preserve and develop rituality, which helped people to internalize external ethical regulations in order to transform them into a vital part of individual inwardness. The foundation of all these levels, however, is precisely the psychological principle of emotions. (Li Zehou 1985, 16). In such a framework, secular life was cherished and emotions functioned as the main source through which the world was experienced. Hence, emotions were the very foundation on which people established and preserved their mutual relations:

Every day, every moment, people experience emotions stimulated from their various relations within their family and community: parent-child,

27 In his “Rich Dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals” (*Chunqiu fan lu* 春秋繁露), Dong Zhongshu writes: “Humaneness is the heart-mind of Heaven, and hence, it is ordered by it” (仁, 天心, 故次以天心) (Dong Zhongshu s.d., Yu xu: 1).

28 As we have seen, this is the unification of the human way (*ren dao* 人道) and the way of heaven or nature (*tian dao* 天道).

lord-subject, brothers, husband-wife, and friends. Emotions are socially, ethically, and interpersonally defined and interwoven to become the substance of human life and community.

In other words, emotions define and accompany the shared experience of human existence and society, and emotional energy is the main motivating force in social life. With *ren* as the core, moral emotions express themselves in morally respectable actions that harmonize interpersonal relations and maintain social order and sustainability.

JIA 2018, 163

In this context, emotion-based substance generates positive feelings and thereby constructively influences social attitudes. Precisely because of this aspect, the Chinese emotion-based substance has obtained such wide ethical implications. In such a view, ethical life is always emotional and virtues are therefore inclinational.

Scholars such as Jia (*ibid.*, 165) shows that this was not the case in the Western tradition, in which the study of moral psychology had traditionally focused on moral reasoning. This view is somewhat too general and does not apply to the entirety of this tradition, which also contained and historically developed numerous sensualist ideas. Even in the Enlightenment era, which witnessed the formation of the groundwork of modern Western ethics, sensualism belonged to those discourses that were taken seriously in the academic world. However, although the sentimentalist stream of thought—especially its main representative David Hume²⁹—became influential in some areas of philosophy, modern Western moral discourses were still most profoundly influenced by Kant's views, according to which morality must be based on a duty that applies moral laws through reason.³⁰ Hence, as Jia Jinhua exposes (2016, 758), even though in recent decades Western theoreticians developed a revitalized interest in the role of feelings in ethics and morality, it is still under debate whether key emotional experiences such as love can be seen as moral emotion. Hence, it is important that “Li Zehou's study of the Confucian ethics of emotion with the general love of *ren* as its core provides a rich source for filling this

29 Hume was a major representative of the sentimentalist current, which held that morality is founded on emotion or sentiment rather than on some abstract moral principles. This view is most clearly expressed in his famous quotation stating, “Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them” (Hume 1817, 106).

30 Li himself also often emphasizes that in this respect, he is closer to Kant than to Hume, because in his system of emotio-rational structure, reason is the decisive and more important element.

gap” (ibid.).³¹ Wang Yunping also notes (2008, 352) that the “Confucian understanding of emotions and their ethical importance confirms and exemplifies the contemporary Western renewed understanding of the nature of emotions.” According to Wang, the reason for the ethical significance of emotions in the Chinese tradition is both that emotions are heavenly endowed and that there exists a union of emotions and reason in Confucian ethics (ibid.). Such a view poses a significant challenge to the predominant Western theories of ethics that have commonly dealt with a search for confirming abstract and normative moral rules.

However, Li’s concept of emotion-based substance has also been criticized (or at least questioned) by some scholars. Wang Jing, for instance, exposes that Li does not primarily define it in terms of individuals, but rather as a kind of shared, collective social consciousness (Wang 1996, 104). In his opinion, such a substance implies the subjugation of the individual to the collective concerns. However, in this context, we ought to remember that in traditional China, ethics was not confined to a strict divide between individuals and society. In Li’s schema of the development of human ethics, we can also clearly see that the shaping of ethics began through a collective emotionality that permeated all human condition, and that it is completed in the individual emotion. Hence, when considering Li Zehou’s work as a whole, it becomes rather clear that he understands emotion as something that embraces both the collective and the individual aspects.

Besides, we must not forget that traditional Confucian ethics was relational; it was a type of the so-called role ethics (see Ames 2011, Rosemont and Ames 2016). This kind of ethics was an integral part of the social system that was based on the special features of what Li Zehou called “relationalism,” which does not correspond with any of the existing Western categories or models, in which the individuals enter into their social relations as independent and isolated selves. In contrast to such views, the Confucian person is constituted by the social roles she lives. In such social networks, human beings cannot be abstracted or separated from their relations with others.³² Because the indi-

31 However, this does not imply that Li can be regarded as a sensualist, for he does not consider emotion as the sole source and motivation for ethics, which is in his view rooted in human emotio-rational structure.

32 This idea can be better understood through Roger Ames’s concept of “process ontology,” in which there are no substances that bear property or essence; every existence is dynamic and relational (Elstein 2015, 242). In modern Chinese philosophy, such a model was first developed in the thirties within Zhang Dongsun’s 張東蓀 (1886–1973) model of plural epistemology (*duoyuan renshilun* 多元認識論, see Rošker 2008, 227).

vidual is constituted by social relations and depends on them, it seems logical that the community exists before the individual.

Although the emotion-based substance is an important element of Chinese traditional religious morality, Li Zehou also promotes its incorporation into modern institutions (D'Ambrosio et al. 2016, 1061). Here, the emphasis lies on the cultivation of human emotions on a personal level based on individual rights. Such an incorporation of emotional contents and elements into contemporary ethics could serve as a foundation for generating communal harmony and interpersonal benevolence. This idea is tightly linked to his presumption, according to which "harmony is higher than justice."

Against this background, it seems only natural that Li's idea of emotion-based substance was highly influential among contemporary Chinese philosophers. In his prominent book *The Ontology of Discourses on Humaneness* (*Renxue bentilun* 仁學本體論), Chen Lai 陳來 proposes to replace Li's notion with the substance of humaneness (*ren bentu* 仁本體). Wu Ning, a reviewer of this book, summarizes the difference between the two contemporary theoreticians and their central notions in the following way:

After comparing his ontology of humanity³³ with Li's ontology of emotion, Chen finds some similarities. Nevertheless, the flaws of Li's metaphysics are evident. For example, it is hard to distinguish the theory of emotional entity from naturalism; also, Li's interpretation of emotion is not philosophical, but anthropological, historical, or psychological.

WU 2015, 453

Chen Lai himself seems to see the crucial difference between Li's emotion-based substance and his own focus on humaneness rather in their basic attitudes toward and relations with Western or global philosophies. He writes:

Li Zehou hopes that Chinese philosophy will appear on the stage in the realm of global philosophy; therefore, he suggests that we should "enter the world." But my position, on the other hand, mainly emphasizes that we have to adapt, renew, and develop our heritage in accord with contemporary Chinese culture. We should participate in the revival and the evolvement of a new Confucian philosophy in such a way, instead of chiefly proceeding from the foundations of global philosophy. This, of course, does not imply a negation of the importance of confronting the modern world.

33 Wu Ning translates the Chinese term *ren* 仁 (i.e., humaneness) with the notion "humanity."

李澤厚表達的是要“走進世界”即從世界哲學的範圍對中國哲學登場的期盼，而我們的立場則以適應中國當代文化傳承和創新發展、參與中華文化的復興、發展新的儒家哲學的需要為主，並非專以世界哲學為思考基點，但無可否認也包含了針對現代世界的意義。

CHEN LAI 2014, 409

In a recent article about his ontology of humaneness, Chen Lai argues that the ontologies of emotion and humaneness are actually related and he seems to point to the possibility that the difference between Li Zehou and himself is to a certain extent only a terminological one. He writes:

Li Zehou also exposes that Confucianism takes humaneness as its root. However, it never occurred to him that actually, humaneness could also be regarded as substance. Especially considering the fact that he saw humaneness as an emotional experience, it seems that in his understanding, this Confucian idea of humaneness as the root was merely another way of expressing emotion as a root.

李澤厚也提到儒家以仁為體，但他從未想過以仁為本體，特別是他所理解的仁是情感經驗，因此他所理解的儒家以仁為體也只不過是以情為體的一種說法

CHEN LAI 2014, 50

However, he then criticizes Li for neglecting the possibility of establishing a humaneness-based substance (*ren benti* 仁本體) and focusing entirely on the sensitive nature of humaneness, emphasizing thereby its role in the human experience of love. In Chen's own view, however, the notion of humaneness had obtained much wider and, in fact, universal connotations already present in Neo-Confucian discourses, which treated it as a dynamic totality of the continuous flow of vital forces (*qi* 氣). Therefore, he points out that for Zhu Xi and his contemporaries, humaneness was already seen as an entirety comprising all possibilities for a sustainable evolvement of human life, i.e., as the substance of the Way (2014a, 50–51).³⁴

34 However, this critic does not imply that Chen grounded his concept of the humaneness-based substance on a simple continuation and further development of the Neo-Confucian thought. On the contrary, he believed that both predominant schools of this current were too one-dimensional. In many aspects, his theory aims to be a synthesis between the two central current of the Neo-Confucian philosophy, namely, the school of structure and the school of heart-mind. The main difference between Chen's ontology and Zhu Xi's cosmology is that the latter proceeded from the dual nature of the universe, which manifested

Regarding his own interpretation of the emotion-based substance, Chen first notes that Li was correct in exposing the characteristics of the traditional Chinese understanding of the substance, which—unlike the Western noumenon—is rooted in phenomena. However, he also cannot help but mention (*ibid.*, 50) that this is a common knowledge, which had already been elaborated at great lengths by Zhang Dainian (and is hence nothing new to experts in Chinese philosophy). He finds additional problematic aspects in Li's alleged emphasis on the individual and also in his materialist worldview:

In Li Zehou's anthropo-historical ontology, the substance is equated with the concrete living individual. But substance cannot be the life of any particular entity as such. It can only pertain to the life of innumerable individuals. Furthermore, the individual Li exposes in this context cannot be brought in accord with his overall theory. Especially regarding the "common existence of human beings and the cosmos," he should not understand it as being linked to individual people. This kind of common existence can only be obtained through the transcendence of the individual. He also repeatedly emphasizes that this common existence of men and cosmos is based on "material synergy." Now, if this common existence only refers to a material one, then it highlights materialism, but simultaneously, it loses its ethical meaning. In such a case, it can only refer to an inseparable unity between human beings as a biologic and physical species on the one side, and the material attributes of the external world on the other. Such a synergic common existence is then no longer a metaphysical one, but only pertains to physics. Li Zehou thinks that only in such a model can human beings assign their various orders upon the cosmos and the nature, respectively. However, it is completely clear that such a project is not possible if the common existence is reduced merely to the material and physical one. And besides, if the unified existence of everything that exists is only a simultaneous existence in the one and the same universe without any inherent connections, then such a common existence does not make any sense.

李澤厚也認為人類學歷史本體就是活生生的個體人的日常生活本身，但本體不能是某一個體的生活本身，而應該是無數個體的生活本身。不過，這裡強調個體與其總體說不能一致。而且李澤厚講“人與宇宙

itself in the relation between structural pattern (*li* 理) and vital creativity (*qi* 氣), whereas Chen grounds his ontology in the comprehensive and integral nature of humaneness as a holistic entirety (see Chen Lai 2014a, 52).

共在”，這就更不能在個體意義上講共在，而必超越個體來講共在。他又往往強調人和宇宙的共在是“人和宇宙的物質性協同共在”，如果共在只是和物質性存在共在，這種共在雖然凸顯了唯物主義，但必然減失了倫理的意義，只能是人作為動物存在的生理事物性與外在世界在物質上一體不分。這個意義上的協同共在，已經不是形而上學的設定，只成了物理學的設定。李澤厚認為有此設定才能使人把各種秩序賦予宇宙——自然成為可能，但很明顯，只有物質性的共在是不可能實現這個任務的。更進一步，如果萬物的共在只是互相間毫無關聯地同時存在於一個宇宙之中，這種共在就沒有意義

ibid., 51

However, in Li's system the emotion-based substance can by no means be reduced to a mere basis of individual life (even though it is reflected in it). Due to the double nature of Li Zehou's concept of emotion (Li Zehou and Liu Yuedi 2014, 197; Li Zehou and Liu Xuyuan 2011b, 53), it is simultaneously also a foundation of collective human life (Li Zehou and Liu Yuedi 2014b, 8). While it is true that Li often focuses on problems of the human mind, he also emphasizes that internal psychological aspects of individuals are constructed and constituted through the external factors of community and society in which these individuals live. He often explains:

From externality, we have internality, just as from ritual, we have humanness (*ren* 仁) ... In terms of the community, ritual (ethics) comes from emotionality (as shared circumstance), whereas for the individual, reason governs emotions.

LI, ZEHOU 2016, 1076

Hence, Li differentiates between collective and individual emotions. The former can be denoted *emotionality*, and the latter as (individual) *emotion* or feeling. From his ethical schema,³⁵ one can clearly see that ritual regulations are based on communal emotionality that arises (as a common reaction) from shared circumstances of social life. In order to clarify this double nature of emotion, he differentiated between intention (*neitui* 內推) and extension (*waitui* 外推) of the emotion-based substance. While the former regards the realm of individual human inwardness, the latter pertains to social and political interactions (Li Zehou and Liu Xuyuan 2012, 15). Hence, Chen's reproach that the emotion-based substance only manifests itself in and is limited to the individual realm, is groundless. The same holds true for Chen's claim that

35 See Chapter 3.

the unity of people and nature (or heaven) cannot regard individual people, for it must be based on a transcendent human being. As we have seen, Li does not acknowledge the concept of Western-style transcendence in Chinese philosophy, but on the other hand, he emphasizes the importance of his notion of “the transformation of the empirical into the transcendental” (*jingyan bian xianyan* 經驗變先驗). The understanding of this notion enables us to see why and how the long lasting process of sedimentation causes that human psychological formations are perceived as being “transcendental” by individuals are in fact a product of the dynamic layering of experience and practice. Analogously, what is seen as transcendence of human beings is actually their integration into the totality of humankind (Li, Zehou 2016, 1117). In this context, it is easy to see that Chen Lai’s critique of Li’s materialism likewise lacks a comprehensive understanding of his philosophical system as an entirety. First of all, Chen’s view of materialism as not pertaining to philosophy but rather merely to physics, is highly problematic, for materialism refers to a scope of meta-physical theories (that is theories dealing with the nature of reality) belonging to philosophical monism that hold that matter is the fundamental substance in reality. Hence, Li’s theory doubtless pertains to materialist philosophy and not to physics. The fact that in Li’s view, material practice is the primary basis of human evolvment—and thus for the specific unity of human beings and nature—does not imply that human beings are confined to matter and cannot surpass the laws of their biological conditions. On the contrary, it is precisely the supra-biological nature of human beings, which enables them to transcend the mechanistic laws of physical reality. In this sense, the emotion-based substance belongs to those (culturally determined) formations of human mind that enable people to generate a specific ethics guided by pragmatic reason.

If we want to compare Chen Lai’s concept of humaneness-based substance and Li Zehou’s emotion-based substance, it is important to begin with exposing the crucial features defining the notions of humaneness and emotion, respectively. Both concepts denote certain kinds of psychological factors that obtained a dimension of ontological fundamentality. However, in spite of this important similarity and even though they are both typical of the specifically Chinese culture and society, there are major differences between them. An often overlooked or neglected aspect, which is nevertheless very important for the investigation of humaneness, can be found in Dong Zhongshu’s elaborations of this notion, because this Han Dynasty scholar defined it as the core of the universe (*ibid.*, 1137). Hence, such a concept of cosmological emotionality reinforced the integration of Confucianism with Legalism. In this way, it has bounded China’s political and religious institutions together for over two millennia (*ibid.*).

However, we must not forget that in contrast to humaneness, the concept of emotion is defined by much wider connotations, for it does not only imply interpersonal empathy but also includes negative emotions like hate or jealousy, and especially wishes or desires. A human substance, which also influences social ethics, has to take into consideration the entirety of emotions and not only their constructive elements.

On the other hand, humaneness as an important factor of human mind also includes rational (or reasonable) elements. Hence, in the Chinese culture, it is constructed as a part of the emotio-rational structure.³⁶ Indeed, the notion of humaneness is also a significant concept in Li's philosophy, for it stands for an inner development, which is directed toward an altruistic goal and is based upon the vital importance of interpersonal relationships. However, the emotion-based substance goes beyond such developments, for it represents the fundamental value and the integral role of emotions per se for the existence and development of human beings and their cultures. On the other hand, humaneness in the sense of a central virtue of traditional, especially Confucian China, also plays a dominant role in the process of cultivating human emotion, which is a predisposition for the proper functioning of the specifically Chinese ethics of relationalism. Against this background, it becomes clear that the two notions are different but also stand in important mutual interaction. However, the emotion-based substance has wider and more fundamental implications than Chen's notion of the humaneness-based ontology, for the concept of humaneness is mainly limited to the metaphysical dimensions of the emotio-rational structure of the (Confucian) human mind.

36 In this context, Li writes: "Humaneness and wisdom compose the psychological forms of many different levels and proportionalities of the 'emotio-rational structure'" (Li, Zehou 2016, 1100).

Harmony and Justice

Seen as the root of the specifically Chinese social ethics, emotions are an important factor that helps us analyze and elucidate the main differences between Chinese and Western ethics. Different evaluation of emotions has *inter alia* led to important differences in the basic psychological structures prevailing in Euro-American and Chinese societies respectively. While the underlying theories of the former derive from the concept of an abstract, isolated individual, the foundation of the latter is a system of relations.¹ Even though both models emphasize the rational control over instinctual desires, Western individualism mainly neglects the important role of emotions as co-constitutive factors of ethical norms and procedures. According to Li, one of the crucial differences between emotions and desires lies in the fact that desires are always centered upon one's self, whereas emotions always have to do with other people or objects from one's environment (Li Zehou 2016, 1080). From this viewpoint, it is even easier to understand that—in contrast to individual-based models—relations played an important role in the Chinese social system. The present chapter will point out Li Zehou's interpretation of the crucial differences between these two patterns of social organization, focusing upon their ethical consequences and connotations.

1 Individualism vs. Relationalism

Li believes that a crucial difference between the Western and the traditional Chinese ethics lies in their respective views on the relation between individual and society. He critically questions the Western systems of ethics and moral philosophy, which is rooted in the notion of individualism. At the threshold of the modern era, individualism began gradually as a way of adapting to the new social, economic, and political conditions in Europe:

1 In this context, Li Zehou also states (Li, Zehou 2016, 1096) that long before him, other modern Chinese scholars such as Liang Shuming 梁漱溟 (1893–1988) and Feng Youlan 馮友蘭 (1895–1990) have already exposed that the Western tradition never developed a view of humans as being internally constituted through relationships.

All streams of individualism and liberalism emerged and expanded with the occurrence and development of modern capitalism.

整個個人主義、自由主義的思潮，都是隨著近現代資本主義的發生和發展而湧現並擴張的。

LI ZEHOU 2013, 4

The roots of such developments, however, can be found much earlier in European history. Li explains that in his view, the Western notion of “people as individuals” has become that tradition’s “traditional unconscious” and that this view was already formed with the shaping of the idea of free civil society of equal individuals in ancient Greece. Later, it was strongly influenced by Judeo-Christian notions of final judgment before God in which each person is equal (Li, Zehou 2016, 1080). Henceforth, it developed into economic, political, social and philosophical theories expressing and relying on individual self-determination and independence. Individualism in the widest sense generally regards the individual as a primary entity and opposes everything that hinders individual development. It found numerous different formulations (that were often not in agreement with each other) in various prevailing philosophies of the Euro-American modern era. In axiology, the term refers to political and social philosophies that accentuates the moral worth of the individual. Li points out (*ibid.*) that in terms of a theoretical reflection individuals can be elevated to conceptions of absolute, transcendental “selves” or evolve into atomic individuals that are independent of other people and other similar principles of pure reason.

For Li, even though Western and Chinese philosophies are similar in following their distinct kinds of virtue ethics, there are still profound general differences between them. While the former is rooted in the idea of a free and abstract individual, the latter is based on a network of relations and could be denoted as a “relational virtue ethics” (*guanxizhuyide meide lunli* 關係主義的美德倫理) (Li Zehou and Liu Yuedi 2014, 209). This basic distinction leads to great differences in the ethical thought that prevailed in these two cultural-philosophical discourses, not only concerning their respective views on the relation between the individual and society, but also regarding the relation between reason and emotion.

Li emphasizes that traditional Chinese societies were structured as networks of relations that bounded together individuals who were not constituted as isolated and independent entities but rather as the so-called relational selves,²

2 Some well-known scholars who established and wrote systematically about the concept of the Confucian “relational self” include Henry Rosemont, Jr., Roger Ames, Karyn Lai, Wang

which means that humans were essentially interrelated and their social relationships largely determined their identities. Li's highlighting such a concept of the human self, which is always situated in particular concrete situations and social settings is linked to the Chinese, especially Confucian traditions, where conceptions of the person focus on relationships. This also implies that each person's chosen pursuits, failures and achievements, can only be understood under consideration of their interactions with others (Lai 2018, 64). According to Ambrosio, "In this way, Confucianism amounts to a moral interpretation of relationships as the fundamental constituents of human life and morality" (D'Ambrosio 2016, 720). Hence, it is in such relationality that people achieve and experience meaning as moral human persons, including values and attitudes toward life (Li, Zehou 2016, 1096).

Ancient Confucians have defined the main structure of human social networks as consisting of five basic relationships (*wu lun* 五倫). The first description (or definition) of the moral contents of these relations can be found in *Mengzi*:

There must be love between fathers and sons, moral appropriateness between rulers and subordinates, difference between husbands and wives; there must be precedence of the old over the young, and trust between friends.

父子有親，君臣有義，夫婦有別，長幼有序，朋友有信。

Mengzi s.d., Teng Wen gong 1: 4

Li interprets the five relations model as a conception of interpersonal relationships, ethical order, and mutual responsibilities, which is rationalized but also includes emotions (Li, Zehou 2016, 1097). These basic relations roughly define in which way interpersonal interactions should be carried out because specific duties and behavioral patterns are assigned to each of them. This model can be viewed as a summary of the elementary human relations in any civic society, for it consists of the familial, the political, and companion relationships. However, it also demonstrates the Confucian emphasis on the family, for three

Qiong. See for instance Rosemont and Ames (2009; 2016), Ames (1994; 2011), Rosemont (1991; 2015), Lai (2016; 2018), Wang (2016). Rosemont and Ames have created a more exact definition of this concept, which they defined as a "role-bearing person." Such a person stands at the core of the Confucian ethics, which they named "role ethics." They emphasize that the term "relation" is too general and too descriptive, for in the Confucian framework, the "roles" people live (not merely play), are also prescriptive in the sense that roles in family and community are themselves normative, guiding people in the direction of appropriate conduct (Rosemont and Ames 2016, 12).

of the five basic relationships are rooted in it. Moreover, as we have seen from the above quotation, the Confucian system of the five basic relationships is not merely a description of our social relationships but also a set of prescriptive norms regulating our social interactions, for each relationship is governed by a virtue (Wang 2016, 194). The crucial role in these moral interactions plays filial piety or family reverence (*xiao* 孝).³ This virtue, which is a constitutive element of the love from a child toward its parents is mostly seen as one of the cardinal virtues in Confucian ethics.⁴ In concrete contexts, this mostly implies the fulfillment of filial obligations toward one's parents.⁵ Among other issues, filial piety is important because the parent-child relationship provides the earliest social environment in which a child learns to respond and to understand normativity in relationships (Lai 2016, 121). Hence, virtue is cultured first and foremost within the family, and within the constraints of duties and responsibilities that constitute family relationships. The priority of family love over love for others outside the family (or, in other words, the priority of closeness over distance), is therefore crucial to Confucian moral epistemology. It is in the family that one first and foremost learns the life of virtue (Fan 2010, xii). The natural sympathy between parents and children establishes the human disposition of love. The love between parent and child constitutes the very ground of the fundamental human virtue of humaneness (*ren* 仁). It must be developed and cultivated in order to build a good society (Fan 2010, 16).

There is also a strong emphasis on the importance of the relationship between husband and wife, for in the Chinese ideational tradition the universe is seen as coming directly from relations between male and female. Hence, Mencius saw the relation between husband and wife as "the greatest human relationship" (*Mengzi* s.d., Wang Zhang 1: 2).

3 Similar to many other aspects of classical Confucian ethics, filial piety represents a great potential for reevaluating and reconstructing some of the modern institutions and ideas. Erin Cline, for instance, exposes (2013, 232) that the strong Confucian emphasis on the parent-children relationship has much to offer in improving, reinforcing, and further developing contemporary educational programs.

4 Paul D'Ambrosio exposes (2016, 727) that "Filial piety is an especially important virtue because it is founded in feelings that are natural for all humans. However, it is only a virtue once it has been cultivated and practiced. Other virtues are similarly grounded in natural emotions (including desires) and developed through practice."

5 Confucian filial obligations mainly include the obligation to respect and obey one's parents, to support, emotionally as well as financially, one's aged parents, to carry on the family name, etc. (Wang 2016, 195).

Confucianism also lays emphasis to the relationships between friends. The *Analects* highlights the significance of looking out and encouraging our friends (see for instance *Lunyu* s.d., Xue er: 4), and Mencius declares the “way” of friendship to be very important, for it contains constructive criticism (*Mengzi* s.d., Li lou 11: 58). Although at first glimpse the relation between friends seems similar to general citizenship, it is still modeled after the relationship between siblings, with emphasis on the order of the relation (Fan 2010, 36). The crucial feature of this relationship is trust (*xin* 信), which comprises rational promises between equals on the one side, but also includes feelings of trustful comradeship on the other. Such emphasis on interpersonal trust can be seen as a basis for the general reliability of human relationships (Fan 2010, 134).

Similarly, in the relationship between rulers and subordinates we find a calling for each to accomplish their respective obligations while also emphasizing the emotional bond between them. The ruler is primarily obliged to ensure the well-being of his people, and the subordinates not only have the duty to obey to his decrees, but also to criticize and even overturn him in case he does not fulfill his social and moral duties (see *Lunyu* s.d., Zi Lu: 15, and *Xunzi* s.d., Wang zhi: 5).

In this way, Confucianism amounts to a moral interpretation of relationships as the fundamental constituents of human life and morality. Morality is hence rooted in the harmonious interplay between different persons, embedded in various social roles. Li uses the term “relationalism” or (in his own translation) “*guanxi-ism*” (*guanxizhuyi* 關係主義) to denote such particularities of Confucian ethics, which establishes morality on the basis of social relations, instead on the foundation of individualism. According to Li Zehou, such understanding is a typical product of the Chinese one-world view.

Because of the Confucian one-world view, people have cherished interpersonal relationships and earthly emotions even more. They were mourning the impermanent nature of life and death. Seeking for the meaning of their existence, they found it in the midst of their actual life among other people. In this way, they found innumerable infinities within the finite and they discovered that redemption can be achieved in this world.

由於儒家的“一個世界”觀，人們便重視人際關係，人世情感，感傷於生死無常，人生若寄，把生的意義寄託和歸宿在人間，“於有限中寓無限”，“即入世而求超脫”。

For Li, such attitude and such understanding is more accurate and closer to reality than social theories based on the notion of an abstract individual, because in the real world there is no such thing as a completely independent, “pure” self, separated from all intentions, emotions and relationships.⁶ Henry Rosemont and Roger Ames seem to agree with such a view, for they state:

It increasingly seemed to us that describing the proper performances of persons in their various roles and the appropriate attitude expressed in such roles in their relationship to others with whom they are engaged, sufficed to articulate an ethics that seemed ... to conform to our own everyday experience much better than those abstract accounts reflected in the writings of the heroes of Western moral philosophy, past and present.

ROSEMONT AND AMES 2016, 9

Li also criticizes such Western discourses for their one-dimensional emphasis on individual autonomy and the idea of free choice. Such paradigms ultimately rest on the underlying presumption, according to which individuals can be separated and abstracted from social contexts, relationships, and even from such assets of human condition that are vital to human life, for instance, from the ability and need for interpersonal connectedness and mutual care (Fan 2010, 13). From the perspective of Confucianism as relationalism, however, humans are basically relational existences. Thus, Li emphasizes:

That people are raised and cared for by their families and communities leaves them with duties and responsibilities to this relationality and even their “kind” (humankind). People do not belong to themselves alone. The very first passage of the *Classic of Filial Piety* (*Xiao jing*) tells us that as our bodies are received from our parents, we are not allowed to harm them. If even harming one’s body is denounced, how could suicide possibly be allowed?

LI, ZEHOU 2016, 1131

6 In this context, Li states that the Confucian view of the origins and future of humankind are more universal than comparable views held by major world religions, because the latter are often relying on a final day of judgement. Besides, they mostly regard their followers as chosen people. Confucianism instead rather looks at the workings of “the way” in everyday situations and relationships (Li, Zehou 2016, 1142).

In the relational system, an individual is not expected to act as an independent, detached moral agent (Lai 2008, 6). Hence, he or she is rarely judged according to an idealized standard of independent selfhood. In such an understanding of the self, relationships and environments largely determine individual values, thoughts, beliefs, motivations, behaviors, and actions. In addition, relationships in this framework are always marked by reciprocal and co-relative complementarity: “A good teacher and a good student can only emerge together, and your welfare and the welfare of your neighbor are coterminous and mutually entailing” (Rosemont and Ames 2016, 12). Even though relationalism involves unequal rankings—for a ruler is the authority of minister, a father the authority of son, and so on—both persons involved in a relationship are still metaphysically and morally complementary to each other in order to form profound social unities composed by their relations.

Such ideas stimulate a view of cooperation that surpasses the gap between independent singularity and obliterated self and challenges the dichotomies between the self and the other or between the individual and the whole. This view is rooted in the paradigm of contrastive complementation, because the distinctiveness of an individual may be measured not simply in terms of their individual merits but also in terms of their wider social impact. This in turn is evaluated according to the individual's position within his or her contextual environment and his or her relations with other individuals (Lai 2008, 88). From an ethical viewpoint, such a relational network has various significant implications, particularly in comparison with the frameworks, which postulate independent stability of individuals.

As we shall see in later sections, this type of ethics leads to harmony (*he* 和) than to abstract notions of justice. Relationalism also includes a type of virtue ethics, although this type of virtue ethics is not founded on the concept of an isolated individual but is rather defined by the relationships, which are intrinsically emotional.⁷ However, Li Zehou also emphasizes (Li, Zehou 2016, 1097) that in this system, it is important to cultivate these underlying emotions, which are rooted in biological instincts, and to link them to fundamental mutual obligations. This means that emotions have to be rationalized, ordered, standardized, and incorporated into a relational network within the human emotio-rational structure. In this structure, relations are objective, while emotions and obligations are subjective and must be differentiated.

⁷ Li often emphasizes that the traditional Chinese virtue ethics is not the same as Aristotle's, where the basis of relationships is that individuals are free and equal but lack emotions as a constituting factor (see for instance Li, Zehou 2016, 1096).

Correspondingly, particular virtues can only manifest themselves in certain relationships (D'Ambrosio 2016, 727). An important characteristic of relationalism is also the factor of inequality or mutual non-equivalence of older and younger, senior and junior, external and internal, upper and lower or close and distant. According to Li, China heavily emphasizes kinship relations, in which people are necessarily not equal (Li, Zehou 2016, 1080). Relationalism therefore includes rational order, but also involves emotional identification and is generated within concrete circumstances, which include emotionality. In such framework, all situations and each person's relationalities are unique. Therefore, their respective duties, responsibilities, and actions similarly also differ to a great extent due to particular circumstances. In the social system based upon relationality, abstract norms, principles and criteria cannot be used for making judgments or decisions independent of concrete particulars (ibid., 1083). In order to function in a harmonious and constructive way, the system of relationalism must be channeled by *du*, the dynamic proper measure.

Even though the system of relationalism proceeds from the relational individual and is rooted in the immediate family, it also develops outward from it toward the larger community and further toward the natural environments in which people live.⁸ Mencius, for instance, described this structure in the following way:

The foundation of the world is the state, the foundation of the state is the family and the foundation of the family is the person.

天下之本在國，國之本在家，家之本在身。

Mengzi s.d., Li Lou 1: 5

Li explains this importance of relationalism for the constitution of the person, which shaped the basic model of social and moral interactions in China, through historical considerations. In the Neolithic period, the area of today's China was occupied by relatively advanced cultures, in which people based their societies on small-scale agricultural production. This type of production developed communities that were mainly constructed through kinship relationships. Against such a social and cultural background, the rationalization of the shamanistic tradition has led to the integration of ideas linked to "relational selves" and to the system of relationalism into the Chinese "traditional

⁸ Li also often emphasizes that in the emotion-rational structure of the relational system, families are structurally bounded to the wider communities and the state (Li Zehou and Liu Yuedi 2014, 207).

unconscious" (*chuantong wuyishi* 傳統無意識). Analogously, the relational individuals, who were existentially organic parts of particular social groups, also became part of the concrete collective social consciousness (*jiti shehui yishi* 集體社會意識).⁹ Such consciousness mirrored the mode in which individuals viewed themselves as a part of their group and in which patterns of cohesion among individuals brought comprehensible unity to inter-human relations. This kind of awareness was formed through shamanistic ceremonies (Li Zehou 1985, 17). The primary collective rites, particularly those that included music and dance, had an authoritative influence on early humans, producing "intense feelings of respect, love and loyalty, which sedimented into the emotional, moral and aesthetic psychological structures necessary for truly human communities to evolve" (Chandler 2016, 163).

Such a historical importance of family clan systems in Chinese culture hence led to the general social significance of relationships between people. In this way, concrete interpersonal relationships formed a network, which became a socio-historical paradigm, and one that was not limited to simple sets of ordered pairs, but also gained great social and ethical importance and assumed an instrumental function as a basic element of systemized social interactions.

The discrepancy between the accent on relationalism and individualism, respectively, is a basic dissimilarity between the two types of ethics, which correspondingly prevailed in the Chinese and in the Western societies. One of the major differences between them is that the former is rooted in the emotio-rational structure, while the latter is rather linked to the rule of reason. However, Li Zehou does not understand relationalism as a complete negation of modern individualism. In his view, it merely represents an alternative to its absolute omnipotence. In other words, it is "not a denial of modern individualism but rather merely opposes rightist liberalism's view of individualism as supreme" (Li Zehou 2016, 1099). Nevertheless, the difference between individualism and relationalism is an important starting point for Li Zehou's critique of communitarianism (Li Zehou and Liu Yuedi 2014, 194), which will be further introduced in the following sections of this chapter.

The relational network in itself, however, is not a perfect system either. It contains several flaws, dangers and deficiencies. At least at the formal level, individualism, which is based upon equality of all people, enables mutual respect of all people and their opinions. The hierarchically structured

9 Due to different developments of the Western intellectual history, such "collective social consciousness" was determined by the notion of individualism in the Euro-American cultures (Li Zehou and Liu Yuedi 2014b, 21).

relationalism, on the other hand, could never lead to the type of discourse ethics as envisioned by Habermas. Another insufficiency of relationalism can be found in its tendency to harmonize particular situations on the grounds of existing achievements and values, and also on the basis of existing power relations. Though it heavily emphasizes flexible and contextual dynamicity, its hierarchical structure is conservative in the sense that it rarely allows innovations that could break the framework of existing ideas and structures of social interaction (*ibid.*, 208–209). This danger is also tightly connected to another one, namely to the predominant role of emotions, which connects people in these networks in a way that precludes the effective functioning of legal sanctions, acts and regulations. In this way, “its greatest benefit turns out to be its greatest risk” (*ibid.*, 209). Besides, due to globalization, the traditional relationalism is falling apart in China as well. Hence, it has to be modified and adapted to the conditions of the modern era.

Traditional spiritual conventions cannot be rebuilt or reestablished anymore. Individual equality, freedom, independence and rights have replaced traditional relationalism and its role-ethics. Where can we thus find a basis for the Chinese virtue ethics? We can only establish it by exposing the emotion-based substance and by attaching importance to the emotive nature of humanness. Hence, in order to establish a new foundation of the Chinese virtue ethics, we have to transformatively recreate human relationships and shape them in accordance with human emotion and psychology.

傳統制度和精神指歸已不可能再造和復現。個體的平等、自由、獨立、權利，取代了傳統的關係主義和角色倫理。那麼，中國的美德倫理究竟到哪裡去尋找它的根基呢？只有提出情本體，重視人性情感，將關係、角色的社會倫理建構原則，轉換性創造為情感、心理的塑造，才能為中國的美德倫理尋找新的根基。

LI ZEHOU 2016d, 10

On the firm grounds of modern law, which should constitute the basis of contemporary Chinese social morality, the focus on relations could serve as a regulative and properly constitutive principle (Li, Zehou 2016, 1139). Li acknowledges that individualism and contractual principles will necessarily arise from modern commercial production, fair trade, and the free sale of labor (*ibid.*, 1136). However, he points out that relations can (and should) still be seen as a vital element, which ensures a more adjusted and more comprehensive social life:

They can surpass the material benefits and harms, adjust the functions of pure equality, and coordinate human interactions based upon absolute freedom: they can preclude contradictions, quarrels and conflicts and prevent market economies to become market societies that are merely concentrated upon money.

它們可以起著超越物質利害、調節純粹平等的作用，協調絕對自由的個人之間的關係、矛盾、糾紛和衝突，使市場經濟不變為一切向錢看的市場社會的市場社會。

LI ZEHOU 2016d, 10

In spite of these problematic actions, however, Li endorses the system of relationalism and even thinks that—in a modified form—it could worldwide serve as an alternative to pure individualism (*ibid.*, 208), which has led Western culture to a cul-de-sac of profit obsession and alienation.

Hence, he endorses a revitalization of traditional Chinese moral philosophy suitable for the complexities of modern societies. This means that its traditional emphasis upon family emotion as both the root and the substance of moral competency must (and can only) be revived on a basis of steady legal regulations in order to prevent misuse of intimate relationships, which can amount to nepotism, cronyism, and other forms of social and political corruption. “Just as intimacy needs the restraining complement of integrity, concrete family feelings require the guiding complement of some form of more general ideals” (Rosemont and Ames 2016, 30).

2 Harmony Is Higher than Justice

Therefore, Li takes traditional relationalism as an important part of traditional Chinese religious morality with strong emotional aspects to exercise a regulative and properly constitutive function. In this way, he posits it as a counterbalance to individualism, aiming thereby to complement the insufficiencies of the exclusive application of modern social morality. While most of the Western theories of virtue ethics divorce the family from the state and distinguish thereby between public and private spheres, traditional Chinese ethical patterns of relationalism connect state and family through seeing a good citizen as cultivated by being a good family member first (Li, Zehou 2016, 1093). The former emphasize reason and regard it as supreme, while the latter are rooted in the emotio-rational structure. Thus, Western ethics emphasizes justice, while the Chinese culture strives for harmony. This difference is

paradigmatic for it defines the essential structure of the two ethical discourses (Li Zehou 2016a, 12). Li points out that describing morality in terms of social harmony rather than abstract notions of justice belongs to the most significant particularities of Confucian ethics and religious morality. He highlights systemic flaws in the conceptualization of individualism advocated by Western theories, for they theorize about the individual abstractly, which enables them to isolate reason and to extract general principles from particular situations (D'Ambrosio 2016, 726). In its essence, this pattern of thought can be questioned from the viewpoint of moral philosophy as such, for as we have seen in the section on relationalism, "all moral arguments for equality and social justice grounded in the concept of the individual freedom can be met by counter arguments equally moral" (Rosemont and Ames 2016, 9). Furthermore, the product of such theorization is a notion of justice as an abstract constellation of rationally defined rules. In various ideologies that underlie such a conceptualization, communities are not the natural state of and for human beings, but only the artificial construct of otherwise discrete individuals (*ibid.*, 11). This view ignores the importance of social ties and roles in forming the individual. Therefore, Li's ethical theory thoroughly stresses contexts and emotions as factors of utmost importance.

In his view, Confucian, relation-based religious morality could (and should) complement and regulate the modern social morality. In this context, Li emphasizes that we can only discuss harmony once we have justice. In other words, harmony would not replace justice but merely regulate it. In present China, people have first to realize rule by law and justice. Without a firm establishment of such a system, it is perilous to enforce just a rule by harmony. Even though he emphasizes the importance of its "proper constitution," the basic principle that underlies the functioning of harmony is that it must not harm social morality, which is principal. Li's idea of harmony "is built upon justice, which is why it is only a 'regulative and properly constitutive' principle and unable to determine or rule 'justice'" (Li, Zehou 2016, 1093). Only in such framework can the reestablishment of harmony as a paradigmatic regulative and properly constitutive principle in the construction of public reason inherent in the norms and laws of modern social morality, present us with many significant theoretical and practical solutions for numerous problems of modern societies, including the phenomenon of widespread alienation. While harmony implicates transforming the people and developing their virtues through education, justice provides the basic governing by law.

According to such a model, harmony and justice must evolve simultaneously. In this way, Li creates a truly comparative dimension as he reflects on both Chinese and Western discourses, shaping thereby an emergent theory of morality, in which he founds social harmony on general, but modifiable

principles of justice. Such combination of harmony and justice “appears to be well able to establish the foundation for a global ethics that reaches across cultural bounds and addresses the moral concerns of more than one tradition” (D'Ambrosio 2016, 735).

However, it is also important to note that in Li's system, the incorporation of harmony into justice should include the pervasion of emotion-based substance into the modern institutions of liberal democracy and the rule of law. In this schema, rational principles would offer the basis for the establishment of an emotion-based harmony. Since customs and norms, expressed in social rituality, originate in emotions (*li shengyu qing* 禮生於情) and since morality is founded upon rituals as condensed patterns of concrete human interaction, moral action is always necessarily linked to natural human emotions. Therefore, emotions need to be developed and cultivated largely in society and narrowly within the individual's psychological structures. Along these lines, individuals can internalize social norms and identify with them both emotionally as well as rationally. This enables them to act in accordance with morality, for in this process social norms are rationalized and abstracted into moral systems (ibid., 728). Concerning the human inwardness, such a model hence focuses upon the cultivation of human emotions. In terms of society, it emphasizes social harmony and communal goodwill on the foundation of individual human rights.

Li recommends this model as being in accord with both reason and emotion (*heqing heli* 合情合理), which he believes distinguishes Confucian harmony from most approaches to justice and morality in the Western traditions. Thus, although in general he considers Rawls's “veil of ignorance,” for instance, as advantageous, he argues that it overlooks concrete particulars and emotional responses. This neglect shows that Rawls's theory fails to consider the entirety of concrete situations. Therefore, such concepts cannot be used as absolute principles but only as general guidelines (ibid., 725).¹⁰ In order to decide on

10 Numerous contemporary researchers of Confucianism are even harsher in their criticism of Rawls's ethical thought. Fan Ruiping, for instance, writes: “Because John Rawls is concerned about the proper distribution of resources and social status, not the pursuit of virtue, his concerns contrast foundationally with, and are distinct from, those of a Confucian account of virtue. Where Rawls focuses on equality, Confucian thought is directed to harmony. Rather than affirming liberal democratic values, the Confucian understanding of social interconnectedness affirms an aristocracy grounded in virtue. These differences arise because Rawls offers an account that is intended to bind persons who share a thin theory, but not a thick account of the good. Although Rawls takes his account as comprehensive, it is nevertheless insufficient, from a Confucian perspective, to frame a proper structure of society. It lacks a thick appreciation of virtue and human flourishing to which Confucians invite us all in order to build an appropriate society” (Fan 2010, xiii).

the particular degree to which such principles can serve as regulatory strategies for particular actions, we must consider all concrete factors by which a certain situation is conditioned and respond in a rationally and emotionally appropriate manner. Hence, although abstract principles of justice must form the basis of ethics, harmony should still represent the ultimate goal, which can only be achieved through combining both rational considerations and emotional reflections.

When Li Zehou exposes that “harmony is higher than justice,” it is because he considers harmony (between people, as well as between mind and body, and between humans and nature) as enabling the regulation and proper constitution of reason-based modern social morality by the emotio-rational structure and relationality. For him, harmony is the highest level of preserving the incessant and sustainable extension of human existence as well as the most effective basis for fundamental ethical concepts such as “common good” and “good life” (Li Zehou 2013, 8). Even though harmony cannot serve as a replacement of the notion of fair and reasonable justice, it can still be considered as “higher” than mere distinctions of right from wrong that underlay the common Western interpretation of this notion.

This is why we say that “harmony is most precious,” instead of seeking for an absolute criterion for distinguishing right from wrong or for defining justice. This is also an expression of differences between the a-priori reason and the wisdom of the pragmatic reason.

所以才說 “和為貴”，而並不去追求一個是非、正義的絕對標準。這也是實用理性的智慧不同於先驗理性的地方。

LI ZEHOU 2006a, 11

At first glimpse, Li's statement that harmony is higher than justice is rather controversial. Inter alia, this is partly due to the recent ideological misuses of the concept. However, in original Confucian teachings and in other dominant traditional discourses, the concept has nothing to do with conflict avoidance or a simple preservation of unity, social peace, discipline, and order. On the contrary, the Confucian notion of harmony is rooted in diversity (see Rošker 2013; Li Chenyang 2014). Li also lays stress upon this issue:

Traditional ritual system emphasizes differences on horizontal and vertical levels. It achieves harmony in and between these differences. Even without the specific traditional social order and its contents, its principle of “harmony in diversity” (which acknowledges differences and seeks harmony in them) is still valuable in present times.

傳統禮制強調上下左右的差別，在這差別中達到和諧幸福。去掉傳統禮制的特定社會秩序和內容，其“和而不同”的原則（即肯定差異，在差異中追求和諧）仍然有現代價值。

LI ZEHOU 2006a, 11

Besides, the ideas of priority of justice on the one hand, and the higher position of harmony on the other, do not contradict one another, since the idea of the priority of the right over the good represents the basis of modern societies. Here, harmony is considered to be higher than justice because it offers the regulative and properly constitutive principle for human life in such societies. In concrete situations, the two can deviate from or even be in conflict with each other. Li points out (Li, Zehou 2016, 1136) that coordinating and integrating the two often requires great political art. It is the art of properly combining and fusing universality with particularity, which is in turn connected to the art of (applying) the “*du*” (“*du de yishu*” “度”的藝術, see for instance, Li Zehou and Liu Yuedi 2014, 204). Before we examine these two approaches more in detail, we shall illuminate the process that allows us to consider all these approaches, methods and factors in the present, modern times.

In China, the integration of harmony, together with a system of interpersonal relationships based in the structural unification of emotions and reason, into the realm of modern social morality could be achieved through transformative creation (*zhuanhuaxingde chuangzao* 轉化性的創造) of its own tradition. Such a reconstruction of a democratic system would not merely insert traditional components into a new framework, but simultaneously underscore the innovative elements that would be autonomously created in this process.

In this context, Li emphasizes the importance of an arduous historical development. His historicism includes an endorsement of liberalism in which the totality exists for the individual and individual rights have priority. However, for him, liberalism is only a result of a certain stage of historical development. Hence, Li often emphasizes that liberalism or capitalism does not represent the end of history, for history necessarily transcends them.

Against this background, it is easier to understand why harmony also serves as a paradigm for an unbiased and just balance of inequality underlying the elementary structure of Confucian interpersonal relations. The long-term continuance of this relationality can only be preserved with harmony, based upon emotions. Even though people are unequal in the relational system, they can still cohabit in harmony because they are linked together by warm emotional ties. This system differs profoundly from the ancient Greek idea of virtue ethics founded on equal, autonomous, and even homogeneous individuals, and also from Rawls's idea of the sense of justice. Emotions here vary in accord with different relationships. Thus, they cannot be generally viewed or subsumed under

a blurry notion of “love.” In relationalism, the content, forms, and the connotations of love change, depending on the concrete relationship:

In the family, although everyone has love, that love takes on different forms for different family members. Loving one’s parents is not the same as loving one’s children, and loving a spouse is not the same as loving a friend. Expressions of love toward elders should have an element of respect, and elders should be tender in loving younger people. Love itself is intricate, rich, and complex. This allows for social harmony to possess idealized diversity while providing happiness and satisfaction, similar to music.

LI, ZEHOU 2016, 1097–1098

Although ancient Greek philosophy also talks about harmony, the Greek concept fundamentally differs from the Confucian one. The former is a harmony of rational order, as in Pythagoras’ relating of the movement of astronomic bodies to music, which does not include any connection with emotions. The Confucian notion of harmony, on the other hand, is founded on the idea of “ritual and music” (*liyue* 禮樂), which lays great stress upon practical and concrete actualization through emotions.¹¹ This actualization is therefore not limited to a mere rational ordering, but also includes a specific logic of emotions.

For example, fathers are meant to educate their children. This is a rational duty. However, at the same time, Confucians advocate “exchanging children” with other families for the purpose of educating them, because without exchanging children the strictness necessary for education can create an emotional distance between fathers and their children, which Mencius sees as extremely bad (4A18). Such distancing refers not only to rational disagreement over right and wrong but also the emotional divergence and conflict that results therefrom. Thus, we have on the one hand the notion of fulfilling one’s fatherly duty (educating one’s child), emphasized in the Xunzi, and on the other hand the importance of emotional harmony within the family as seen in the Analects.

ibid., 1098

11 The traditional Chinese type of harmony is hence not limited to the external harmony of variously structured interpersonal and communal relations, but also includes internal human pleasure and peace of mind (Li Zehou 2016a, 12).

Li Zehou's idea of the way in which justice and harmony interact, develop, and involve each other is also a manifestation of the dialectical relation between concrete situations and universal principles imbedded in abstract theories of moral thought.

He suggests, for instance, that in some cases, the employment of the basic utilitarian principle of "the greatest happiness for the greatest number" is reasonable and just. However, these cases have to be analyzed, evaluated, and measured within their concrete historical and situational contexts; they can by no means be applied as universally valid measures. Sacrifice, for example, cannot always be understood as being good or bad just because of some abstract principle.¹² Such principles cannot serve as standards of justice in judging individual behavior. Each individual's relationality is unique and the same applies for the concrete situations in which he or she is acting. Hence, we must consider that their respective responsibilities, obligations, and actions also necessarily differ due to these distinctive circumstances. It is therefore reasonable and logical not to exclusively apply abstract principles of justice to make judgments or decisions independent of concrete particulars. As all abovementioned issues essentially involve relationality and human emotion, they seem generally quite difficult to regulate solely through the principles of justice and public reason, which function between independent individuals (Li, Zehou 2016, 1102).

In this regard, Li points out that in contrast to principle-based judgments, Confucianism talks about the interplay between abstract principles on the one hand, and their flexible application in actual practice on the other. This dynamic relationship between principles (*jing* 經) and flexibility (*quan* 權),¹³ which can be seen as a relation between universality and particularity, involves the issues of how to manage formal justice and substantive justice in various concrete circumstances (ibid., 1102). In Li's view, Confucianism offers us

12 In this context, Li exposes that during wartime, many people, including innocent men and women, are sacrificed. He reminds the readers of the firebombing in Dresden and dropping of nuclear bombs on Japan during World War II (Li, Zehou 2016, 1082).

13 In contemporary Chinese academia, this relationship between principles and flexibility is often defined as a kind of correlative and complementary dialectics, typical for the referential frameworks underlying traditional Chinese thought: "In traditional Chinese thought 'Principles and flexibility' refers to an ethical view concerning the binary structured relation between universality (*jing*) and particularity (*quan*). The two antipodes do not stand in a simple opposition, but are rather determined by a dialectical relation." (「經權」觀點在傳統中國思想而言，是普遍性之「經」與特殊性之「權」二元結構的倫理學式觀點。「經」與「權」之間，不是單純的對立，而是一種辯證關係。)(Li Weihuan 2015, 138).

various methods to implement this kind of flexibility by not uncritically obeying the established principles of ritual through consideration of emotions involved in the particular situation (*ibid.*, 1119). Thus, Confucianism clearly shows that reason is not solely found within ritual in the sense of established principles of social norms and laws, but it is also linked to ritual, which includes particular patterns of emotionality. Such an understanding of ritual is important, because rituality originates in emotions (*li shengyu qing* 禮生於情) and is hence embedded in the emotion-rational structure of humanity.

Therefore, Li once again points to the importance of applying *du* 度 as the “properly measured ordering of systems” (*jie zhi you du* 節制有度), the functioning of which begins with regulating the natural emotion between relatives by molding them into rationalized forms. Such a measure defines by virtue of right proportions of emotion and reason, for it is rooted in their mutual fusion (Li Zehou 2014b, 4).¹⁴

Relying on empiricism rather than a priori theories, Li highlights that *du* (in the sense of grasping the dynamic and changeable proper measure) can only be mastered within actual practice. Hence, it is determined by particularity rather than the universality of abstract principles. Applying *du* involves a movement from the particular to the universal, and not vice versa. Instead of judging along the lines of a single principle, one would assess and treat the problems and benefits of concrete actions through the art of grasping its flexible and dynamic equilibrium. *Du* can surpass and simultaneously balance the tension between history and morality and in so doing provide guidance and norms for proper moral behavior. This is especially important, for in Li's view, “historicism and ethicism are often at odds with one another”¹⁵ (Li, Zehou 2016, 1140). Concretely, this means that we should, for example,

promote economic development insofar as it improves people's lives, and yet at the same time we should remain emotionally aware of the suffering that remains in the world and retain a sense of benevolence toward others in order to allow historical tragedy and moral emotion to guide our grasp and establishment of “*du*.” ... We cannot simply adopt strict utilitarian or liberal principles of justice (*ibid.*, 1091).

14 In Li's understanding, the balance between all extreme oppositions determining our life can be achieved by developing a sense of *du* (度), comparable to Kant's power of judgment (Li Zehou 2007, 383). It can be cultivated by (aesthetic) education, which develops “the senses, the imagination and the intellect, allowing them to interact freely without any concern for orthodoxy or practical utility” (Chong 1999b, 124).

15 As an example for such a discrepancy he states that societies with slavery, for instance, were “much more inhumane than earlier primitive ones, but that this was a necessary step in history” (Li, Zehou 2016, 1141).

In the context of comparing justice and harmony and explaining the role of *du* in judging moral behavior, Li also exposes the problematic nature of the concept of equality, and he warns against approaching issues of justice or moral duty through such abstract conceptions. He exposes that the real world is much more defined by diversity and variety than by some abstract equality and points out that in this regard, we also have to consider problems linked to the factual economic and social inequality. In his view, the gap between rich and poor should also be treated with applying *du* in the sense of grasping a proper measure in accordance with particular situations and contexts (*ibid.*, 1090).

The concept of such flexible and dynamic proper measure, which, as we have seen, belongs to the basic methodological tools of Li Zehou's thought, negates the priority of universality and rejects the method of one-dimensionally imposing abstract rational principles on concrete actions, relations, or objects. It involves dealing with situations differently according to their particular circumstances. Hence, Li's philosophy essentially rejects the idea that morality (and ethics) could be derived from such universal application of abstract reason.¹⁶ But *du* can be applied in various situations; its crucial function is providing guidance by finding a balance within the tension between history and morality and between reason and emotionality. Grasping the *du* thus naturally means having empathy or compassion for weaker groups.

3 Utilitarianism, Communitarianism and the Response to Sandel

Proceeding from such a clarification of the basic difference between justice and harmony, and from a search for possibilities of establishing a mutually complementary relation between these two concepts, Li explains his views on the Western pragmatic philosophy.¹⁷ He also evaluates theories of utilitarianism and the socio-political model of communitarianism. The elucidation of these, and several other related questions is an important subject in many

16 In this context, Li Zehou also exposes that the methodological difference between "transcendental reason" and the idea of "pragmatic reason" can be clearly seen precisely through the application of *du*, which represents an important instrument of the latter (Li, Zehou 2016, 1079).

17 He regards American pragmatism—especially Dewey's philosophy—as very important, because, it is closer to Confucianism than any other stream of Western philosophy, except Marxism, which in his view, is even closer. Anyway, what all these discourses have in common, is the emphasis on social community instead of on individual, higher valuation of the empirical over the theoretical, and a stress on the concrete issues instead of abstract and transcendent ones (Li Zehou and Liu Yuedi 2014, 22).

of his works.¹⁸ Several ideas and assessments linked to these issues can be found in his famous essay regarding his view on the ethical theory of Michael Sandel, which has been translated into English by Paul J. D'Ambrosio and Robert A. Carleo (see Li, Zehou 2016). In this lengthy treatise, Li responds to Sandel's theory along the lines of his own ethical thought.¹⁹

Li's critique of Sandel is mainly based upon his questioning of the ideas that were advocated by the contemporary American philosopher in three of his most well-known works, namely, *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy* (1996), *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?* (2009), and *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets* (2012). Li claims that although these books include several important ideas and concerns, which have to be taken seriously, Sandel's theory presents very little original thought:

Sandel relies on examples from historical and contemporary America, which is not even three hundred years old, to make his points. Vast differences exist between America and China in terms of both their histories and present states. I do not want to, nor could I, discuss in detail all of Sandel's various points and issues. I rather would simply like to respond to Sandel's basic ideas according to China's history and current circumstances.

LI, ZEHOU 2016, 1069

First of all, Li does not agree with Sandel's critique of utilitarianism. In his own critique of this theory, Li proceeds from the problem of justice. He believes that the traditional Western concept of justice itself is established in line with the Western type of reason that relies on abstractions from concrete situations in order to form general laws and rules. In his view, Sandel's approach is based

¹⁸ See particularly Li Zehou 1999 and 2002a.

¹⁹ In his review of this text, however, Robert A. Carleo points out that in this essay, Li Zehou "only rarely engages the thought of its supposed object, Michael Sandel. Rather, this informal text, which takes the form of an interview or dialogue (that Li has written himself), appropriates Sandel as a means of discussing and critiquing the modern Western philosophical tradition in general. Rather than examining the Harvard professor's actual arguments, Li brings up the hypothetical moral quandaries and discusses Sandel works (generally leaving out Sandel's conclusions) as a means of asserting his own ideas and correcting what he sees as flaws in Western philosophical discourse, and especially the liberal tradition" (Carleo 2016, 1027). Even though this comment is in regard to the original Chinese book with the same title, which comprises several additional chapters, it also applies—at least to a certain extent—to the English translation of its core part. Paul D'Ambrosio (2016, 727) also thinks that "the connections between Sandel and Li are much stronger than Li is willing to admit, though he is not necessarily unaware of them."

upon similar suppositions: “Li specifically opposes Sandel’s ‘theory of justice’ for allegedly failing to recognize the extent to which emotions and reason are integrated with one another” (D’Ambrosio 2016, 720).²⁰ As we have seen in the previous section, the Western concept of justice is defined through abstract rational principles. Sandel’s critique however, is not centered upon this problem, for his own theory of communitarianism is likewise rooted in the notion of justice as a moral and political ideal.²¹ He rather attacks utilitarianism for its basic groundwork, in which the ideal of justice is based on a principle that aims to achieve the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people. But Li does not entirely negate this principle, for in his view, it is “reasonable in certain ways and can or even should still be used in political policy making and the implementation of laws” (ibid., 1081). For governments, which maintain social existence, sacrificing individuals or the minority in order to protect the existence, happiness (in the sense of having fundamental material aspects of individual’s needs), safety and welfare of the majority is sometimes an unavoidable necessity. Li thinks that in such cases, this attitude is not unjust (Li Zehou 2014, 204). He emphasizes, however, that only by confining “the greatest happiness for the greatest number” to material aspects of life can utilitarianism be considered political philosophy. But even considering this limitation, it is still important to see that the utilitarian model is but a historical necessity closely connected with the needs of human survival. Therefore, each case has to be understood and analyzed according to its concrete historical contexts, and none can be evaluated abstractly. Judgments and decisions can never be made without consideration of concrete, specific circumstances. All such issues must be evaluated differently in different countries, historical periods, and under different conditions. While the Holocaust and the Nanjing massacre were crimes against humanity and therefore absolutely inexcusable, the dropping of the nuclear bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki can be justified, for even though it caused a disaster, it prevented the deaths of even more people (ibid.).

20 However, according to Paul D’Ambrosio, Li Zehou locates the same shortcomings in Sandel’s approach that Sandel himself finds in classical Western theories of justice. He believes that in this way, Li’s project takes Sandel’s critique a step further along the same trajectory (D’Ambrosio 2016, 721).

21 However, in his book *What Money Can’t Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets* (2010), Sandel also emphasized that discrimination is unavoidable in any account of justice. He believes that “theorizing about individuals as pure equals overlooks this fact, and limits justice to an abstract concept. Therefore, reasoning about justice needs to go beyond the scope of rights and freedom alone and become invested in concrete particulars” (D’Ambrosio 2016, 723).

According to Li, “These questions cannot be decided by intellectual calculation according to abstract principles” (ibid., 1083). In this context, Li frequently points out that in his view, all ethical behavior has to be seen and evaluated on the grounds of the basic criteria, which follow the preservation and sustainable development of the existence of the human species. The use of these guidelines also involves the application of the aforementioned combination of principles (*jing* 經) and flexible engagement (*quan* 權) with regard to concrete situations.²²

However, the idea of sacrifice as a necessary evil is in contradiction with Li’s own endorsement of Kant’s idea of human beings as ends. On the other hand, he exposes that this was not always the case, nor does he predict that it will necessarily always be applicable in the future. Instead he simply argues that given our current historical conditions, this principle is moral (D’Ambrosio 2016, 725).²³ Hence, he has repeatedly emphasized that all people are as ends in themselves and should not be used as instruments or means. He also often exposed that individuals must have the freedom to choose and to make decisions for themselves. In his view, the idea of human beings as ends in themselves

hugely elevates the position and value of the individual, as well as respect for personal character, and thereby liberates the individual from various forms of enslavement by the past’s political and economic systems, traditional customs, and ideologies.

LI, ZEHOU 2016, 1084

Hence, he still agrees with Michael Sandel’s view that due to its neglecting the interests of minorities, utilitarianism can be dangerous; it can cause a lot of suffering and bring about severe problems (Li Zehou 2014, 205).

On the whole, however, Li refutes Michael Sandel’s general critique of utilitarianism. On the other hand, he neither agrees with the communitarian model, which is propagated by Sandel as a more humanist alternative to the liberal system. He emphasizes that he is against this model in spite of its current popularity among numerous Chinese scholars (Li Zehou and Yang Guorong 2014,

22 This interactive relation between universal principles and the flexible application can also be seen as connected to the dialectical interaction between absolute ethics (which is connected to religious morality) on the one side, and the relative, empirically determined ethics on the other. Although the former is an intrinsic principle, which is not limited by any concrete historical or material circumstances, it still takes specific relativist ethics (or social morals) as the basis for its own functioning.

23 However, the idea that people should be treated as ends is therefore a guiding principle or doctrine that needs to be negotiated in consideration of specific contingent conditions (D’Ambrosio 2016, 725).

124). In his view, the main reason for this trend, which is especially strong in the Modern or New Confucian stream of thought, is because they oppose liberalism, for in their understanding, its premises of a “nuclear” and “autonomous” individual are completely incompatible with traditional Chinese, especially Confucian social model, which is rooted in interpersonal social relations (Li Zehou 2016, 23). Hence, they believe that communitarianism with its emphasis on community is more compatible with China’s tradition. But in Li’s view, the communitarian model is very dangerous for contemporary China, for in the name of different (large or small) communities, it could lead to the renewed enhancement of massive control of individuals by society and to the oppression of their individual rights under the banner of “public will.” In this context, Li warns against the “dictatorship of the masses” and emphasizes that the Chinese people should not forget their historical lessons (*ibid.*). Just as we can only discuss harmony once we have justice, we can only discuss the “rule by people” once we have the rule of (and by) law (Li, Zehou 2016, 1100).

Li Zehou does not believe communitarianism could ever replace liberalism. In his view, liberalism is still a better alternative²⁴ (Li Zehou and Liu Yuedi 2014, 214). He does not agree with Sandel’s critique of John Rawls’s theories. Although Sandel emphasizes that the laws and systems of contemporary societies lack moral dimensions, Li believes that following the norms of public reason can certainly be seen as moral behavior (Li Zehou and Yang Guorong 2014, 119). Hence, even though he agrees with Sandel in his basic presumption that morality and politics cannot be separated (Li Zehou and Yang Guorong 2014, 121), he still emphasizes that Sandel’s model is not a suitable alternative. At most, communitarian elements can only assist as a supplement to liberalism by reducing some of its concrete problems. He explains the main reason for this standpoint as follows:

The concept of modern social morals I discuss is overall very close to liberalism. In addition to freedom, equality, independence, human rights, and democracy, it also includes tolerance, compromise, cooperation, mutual respect, equality of opportunity, and value neutrality. These are all founded on the public reason of modern society. It is my view that we should admit that these are moral, and distinguish them from religious morals, which are full of particular emotional beliefs and involve the pursuit of “goodness.” The critique of liberalism found in Sandel and other communitarians, on the other hand, does not see these virtues of public reason as moral.

LI, ZEHOU 2016, 1130

24 For a more detailed introduction of Li’s view on liberalism, see the next section.

Therefore, he rejects the communitarian view of the concept of human rights, pointing out the abstract nature of such criticism. In his own view, rights must always be seen in the context of their respective contents, which arise in different concrete historical circumstances and under different conditions (Li Zehou and Yang Guorong 2014, 124). Even though Sandel claims that in general, defining rights should be sensitive to historical and cultural components, Li still thinks his ethics is not sufficiently linked to the concrete social reality. Therefore, communitarianism cannot be counted as a model that is rooted in a genuine philosophical ethics.

Although he exposes the dangers of the communitarian social models, Li still holds to his opinion that rights should never be completely separated from concepts of “goodness.” That which is valuable in traditional morals has to be preserved, while many of its other elements, which are unsuitable for the modern era, have to be abolished. However, instead of unifying different religious moralities and using them as a replacement of the public reason, he once again draws attention to the necessity of applying them merely in the function of the “regulative and properly constitutive” principle—but not to the point of replacing rights.

In this way we can avoid modern individual rights once again becoming subordinate to traditional conceptions of “goodness” and the re-enslavement of the individual to the community. However, it is not easy to say what concrete measures we can take to control this. That is why I call this “political art.”

ibid., 1133

In Li's view, harmonious relations between individuals living in a community can only be achieved through the mutual interaction between rational cultivation of individual emotions, needs and desires on the one hand, and the community as a whole on the other. Even though communitarianism is a model for people's communities, it lacks the component of human emotion and is not rooted in interpersonal relations (Li Zehou and Liu Yuedi 2014, 209). Only on the coherent basis of such an interplay of particular individuals on the one hand and individuals and community as a whole on the other can it become possible to establish a basis of a sensible, fair, and democratic political order. Li aims to develop this model by upholding the aforementioned “new way of the inner sage and external ruler.”²⁵

In this aspect, however, Li Zehou's critique might be too harsh, for Sandel's idea of the individual self is rooted in the “narrative” nature. In his book

²⁵ See the section “Two Kinds of Morality” in Chapter 4.

Liberalism and the Limits of Justice, Sandel argues that human beings must be understood as members of families, communities or nations, and hence as people, rooted in history (Sandel 1982, 179).

On the other hand, Li Zehou supports Sandel's critiques regarding the severe problems brought about by the system of market societies. Since they are predominantly based upon rational exchange and the principles of free trade, they can lead to a decay and erosion of morality. Although in such societies, human desires and inclinations can be bought and sold, they actually neglect the important role of human emotions in the functioning of society, because feelings cannot be merchandised (Li Zehou and Liu Yuedi 2014). On the other hand, we have to acknowledge that Sandel is, at least to a certain extent, aware of this problem. Although he does not explicitly state whether emotions can or cannot be bought or sold, the reason for this hesitation is simply that he does not want to mix economy and feelings at such a level (D'Ambrosio 2016, 929).²⁶

The market and its laws cannot and must not be seen as a universally valid, positive powers that could be recognized as the common good. Li emphasizes that "in this regard, the issues that Sandel brings up have great value and should be taken into consideration" (Li, Zehou 2016, 1139). However, he exposes that he cannot agree with Sandel's proposal regarding communitarianism as a suitable alternative to the market society. He repeatedly emphasizes that the greatest danger incorporated in the communitarian model is that it could lead us back to the domination and prevailing authority of traditional values, ideologies, and customs. In such a system, the individual would become oppressed anew by traditional morals that could serve as instrumental functions of governments.

Sandel and communitarianism lack Hegel's historical sense of concrete universals. They fail to recognize the important shift from Hegel to Marx and don't see that liberalism is historically rooted in modern economic life. Therefore, the liberal individual freedom and value neutrality they oppose are in fact pressing necessities for many nations in breaking free from the economic and political manifestations of their traditional societies.

LI, ZEHOU 2016, 1128

In contrast to such "alternatives," traditions could well be incorporated into modern social moralities with their new values such as public reason,

26 In his book *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets*, for instance, Sandel devotes a whole section to the way economists try to calculate emotional aspects of gifts and gift cards (D'Ambrosio 2016, 929).

contractual principles, and respect for the individual human subject. Li is convinced that his own theory of anthropo-historical ontology provides new paths for achieving this goal on the basis of ontologically fundamental psychology (*xinli cheng bentu* 心理成本體), and through the idea of historically constructed reason in which the empirical of the humankind becomes transcendental for the individual. In this model, reason alone is no longer the sole and supreme principle, for it is replaced by the emotio-rational structure. Such a system is certainly easier to realize in a society, based upon relationalism (*guanxizhuyi* 關係主義) and operating on the grounds of the emotion-based substance (*qing bentu* 情本體). However, in Li's view, it can provide us a universalizable course for establishing a new global ethics. In this regard, he once again points to the importance of applying *du* 度 in the sense of a dynamic proper measure. Firmly rooted in the concrete social circumstances, it can help people to grasp the most suitable policy:

Some people emphasize market economy, others warn against it, for it can bring about various crises. Some people emphasize globalization, others are against it. The important question is how to master all these possibilities and how to balance them by applying *du*, the dynamic proper measure.

這個強調市場經濟，那個強調市場經濟帶來的危害，一個強調全球一體化，一個反對，都對啊。怎麼掌握這個東西的度，才是重要的。

LI ZEHOU 2016, 57

In order to discover how and to which degree the *du* 度 should be applied, doctrines and universal moral principles have to be discussed under consideration of the specific circumstances determining concrete actual situations. This idea can be linked to the correlative relation of the aforementioned elements of *jing* 經 and *quan* 權. At times Li describes *du* as a measure applied in the dynamic relationship between culture and society on the one, and human inwardness on the other, with the term "Chinese dialectics" (*Zhongguo bianzhengfa* 中國辯證法, see for instance Li Zehou 1985b, 34 and 1980, 91). Here, we might actually find a similarity between Li's view and Sandel's ideas. The latter has also argued for a dialectical relation between moral principles and concrete situations (see for instance Sandel 2010, 28). Li Zehou, however, is more focused upon their respective differences.

Among other issues, he reproaches Michael Sandel with primarily individualistic rather than relational understanding of persons. Although he acknowledges Sandel's recognition of and emphasis on relationality, he still claims it is not fundamental enough: "Even while Sandel opposes individualism

and liberalism, his advocacy of virtue ethics still rests on ancient Greek ideas of equality" (Li, Zehou 2016, 1080–1081). Such a concept of equality leads to abstractions that unavoidably neglects elements of dependence and overlooks the impact of emotional bonds. Li argues that communitarianism is still rooted in individualism, which understands the self as an isolated individual that is essentially equal to others. Relationalism, on the other hand, is different because it sees individuals as constituted by society whereby inequality is an important paradigm of social interactions. In Li Zehou's view, the communitarian model of society is constructed of different connected yet isolated individuals, whereas relationalism sees the person and society as mutually correlative and complementary. Some scholars (including Sandel himself) believe that such a critique is not entirely justified:

Sandel understandably feels unjustly accused here, as he is among the contemporary Western philosophers most emphatic about recognizing human relationality—what he calls the “situated” nature of the self.

CARLEO 2016, 1028–1029

In this regard, we have to point out that Li's critique is not directed against this “situated” nature of individuals, but rather proceeds from his own notion of the specifically Chinese relationalism (*guanxizhuyi* 關係主義), which is, as we have seen, tightly linked to the concept of the emotion-based substance (*qing bentì* 情本體) and should hence be discriminated not only from individualism, but also from communitarianism. “In this respect, he draws on the idea that human emotions are the beginning of the Way (*dao* 道)” (D'Ambrosio 2016, 720). Therefore, they are mirrored and expressed in formal proprieties of social life (*lijie* 禮節).

In relationalism, relationships are interpersonal bounds of moral nature and as such, they become the basic components of morality and ethical life. In such a system, morality is grounded upon social norms, customs and rituals, which are condensed (*ningju* 凝聚) patterns of effective and productive human interaction.²⁷ As a central factor included in relational systems, natural

27 In his theory of two moralities, Li emphasizes that moral norms and systems evolve and are then condensed when they are able to meet certain socio-historical conditions (D'Ambrosio 2016, 727). On the individual level this means that they become applicable for establishing harmony in human relationships under concrete economic, political, and social conditions. As soon as individuals internalize social norms, they identify with them both emotionally and rationally, and can act in accordance with them. “Norms are then abstracted and rationalized into moral systems. Li praises Confucianism, especially in contrast to the Western tradition, for remaining aware of conditional and emotional factors in moral considerations” (ibid.).

human emotions are developed and cultivated externally in society and culture, but internally in the mental structures of every individual.

This does not imply, however, that relationalism should be applied as a total replacement for individualism.

Li is adamant that his idea “harmony is higher than justice” means that he wants to infuse Western principles of justice into Confucian emotion-based morality, and not that he wants to abandon theories of justice. Rational principles would ideally provide the grounding upon which emotion-based harmony could be established.

D’AMBROSIO 2016, 727

Just as the amalgamation of emotion and reason in a coherent emotio-rational structure is not a total rejection of reason but only a denial of its absolute domination, relationalism is not a total rejection of modern individualism. It merely competes against the view of individualism as supreme. Hence, Li sees relationalism as an important element of traditional Chinese religious morals, which can provide the regulative and properly constitutive principle for the individualism contained in modern social morality (Li Zehou 2016, 1099). At the same time, he emphasizes (*ibid.*) that it also possesses a universally applicable nature, which could in principle allow it to be expanded and realized globally.

While Li emphasizes the difference between Sandel and himself, some scholars (e.g., D’Ambrosio 2016; Carleo 2016) emphasize that in many aspects, the two philosophers are actually more compatible than it seems on the first glimpse. Their general orientations are quite similar. Basically, they proceed from comparable concerns and expose similar problems. Even though their basic approaches are rooted in different philosophical traditions, further comparative studies of their ethical systems could certainly provide a solid foundation for a global ethics that surpasses the boundaries between different particular cultures.

4 Western and Chinese Liberalism

As we have seen, Li Zehou is against the communitarian theory, while under certain conditions he still endorses some utilitarian principles. However, in spite of his critical views on liberalism, he still thinks its theory is much more developed and advanced than the political theories of utilitarianism²⁸

28 This is a somehow peculiar statement if we take into consideration that according to several different definitions, utilitarianism is grounded in classical liberalism and is

(Li, Zehou 2016, 1084). While utilitarianism calculates people as individuals on the basis of “unified human desires,” liberalism is founded in the modern concept of individual human rights through contract theories. Hence, it mirrors and is much more appropriate to handle diverse problems brought about by the modern market economies and their basic control over the conditions of human life. In contrast to utilitarianism, liberalism is rooted in the idea of equality and it lays stress upon the diversity of individuals. The representatives of this political theory see all people as ends in themselves and emphasize that they must not be used as means or instruments for achieving some external goals. Another Kantian idea that is assumed by liberalist theoreticians is that of individual’s freedom to choose and decide for themselves. Hence the value of the individual, his or her position, and personality are immensely elevated. Li emphasizes that it was liberalism that set the individual free from various kinds of enslavement by traditional ideologies, customs, and social or political orders. This is also the main reason that he sees communitarianism as dangerous; for him, it represents a step back from the already achieved modern values.

Similar to the natural sciences, liberalism can presuppose actually nonexisting suppositions in order to establish its theoretical conclusions: hence, its central ideas such as the “veil of ignorance” and “atomic individuals” are mere theoretical premises without historical reality. In his own philosophy, Li Zehou always follows his historical worldview, and therefore he cannot endorse such methodological procedures, for in his view, “they are unable to truly clarify and respond to the origin and development of philosophical issues” (Li, Zehou 2016, 1084). On the other hand, he still emphasizes that its theoretical bases are much more reflective and suitable to the requirements of people living in modern societies than those of utilitarianism.

Yet, because it is based upon the free buying and selling of labor and competition, which often leads to the economic survival of the fittest, it is still linked to numerous problems. Generally speaking, however, the benefits of a liberal market economy still enormously compensate its harms.

In Li’s view, the liberalist principles of justice and public reason as well as those of atomic individual and human rights are the elementary concepts of modern social morality. He exposes that they represent the realization of the ideas promoted by the Enlightenment thinkers. They have led to the establishment of modern market economies and liberal societies not because of these

sometimes even described as specific development of the liberalist theory. In some of these descriptions, utilitarianism is even understood as a subcategory of liberalism, which is seen as an umbrella term covering all these theoretical developments (see for instance Freiman 2013, 250). Hence, the understanding of this statement needs to be grounded on a distinction between classical and modern or social liberalism.

theories, but because they were supported by the development of economic structures. This is also one of the reasons that they will continue to spread and expand globally. Since they are a result of trends and tendencies of concrete actual life, Li believes they cannot be repelled in spite of their often problematic nature. Modern economy—characterized and determined by the laws of market, by the production and exchange of commodities, and by free trade—functions as the basis and the origin of contemporary social actualities.

Some critics believe that Li tends to depoliticize the inherently political concept of freedom by subsuming it into a more general and abstract anthropological account of human existence. But Li is aware that the concepts of freedom, individual human rights, equality, and democracy promoted by liberalist thinkers are artificial; hence, theoretical equality can often in fact strengthen practical inequality. In reality, the liberalist concept of freedom is limited to the free exchange of commodities. For him, it is clear that liberalism can lead to a vast damage and destruction of morality. He emphasizes that liberal ideals are simply fiction (Li, Zehou 2016, 1085). In his view, this is because they were established as abstract principles, completely separated from concrete historical circumstances. Li emphasizes that long ago, Marx has already pointed out the exploitation of surplus value in the trading of labor as a commodity under the facade of allegedly “free and equal” conditions. Hence, Marxism has clearly shown that the theoretical concepts of “liberty and equality” are, in fact, highly deceitful and often simply false. Li points out that all these problems are caused by the failure to distinguish between “formal justice,” which regards freedom and equality in political procedures on the one side, and “substantive justice,” which also considers the lack of freedom and equality in terms of economic position on the other. In his view, the most basic solution of these problems seems to be “uprooting economic inequality and striving for distributive justice” (Li, Zehou 2018, 1087).

Besides the abovementioned elementary points, Li does not agree with the Marxist solution to these problems. In his philosophy, he was deeply influenced by Marx’ early works, especially by his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, but he does not agree with the later evolvement of Marx’s economic theories.²⁹ Li disapproves of the logic of the crucial concepts elaborated by Marx in his *Capital* and criticizes it through the lens of Kantian “transcendental

29 Here, we could add that Li’s refusal to deal with the later, mature Marx is certainly linked to his largely uncritical attitude towards liberal systems and the development of capitalism as such. On the other hand, one might also wonder why and how he managed to completely neglect the mature Marx’s critique of the abstract (“bourgeois”) category of “human being” or “humanity” per se as veiling the specific conditions of modern capitalist society (and the modes of social stratification and domination which oppose the existence of an indeterminate generality such as the category of “the human being”). This

illusions,” revealing that Marx has summed up the “two-fold character of commodities” in the “two-fold character of labor.” Here, the crucial point was that—according to Li—Marx saw “exchange value” as a product of “abstract labor,” since for him, the exchange of commodities was an act characterized by a total abstraction from use value.³⁰ According to Li, ideas such as socially necessary labor time, which were derived from the concept of abstract human labor, do make sense in rational analysis, but since they are completely separated from actual circumstances of concrete human lives, they are not empirically operational (Rošker 2019, 26). In Li’s view, Marx has completely separated the concept of labor from its concrete empirical environment; he abstracted the “labor-power” from the actual labor and from the concrete historical practice. This has caused him to slip into an abstract Hegelian idealistic speculation, in which he aimed to prove his concept of surplus value through a unified and homogenized, abstract idea of the “expenditure of human labor-power.” In this abstract construct, the class struggle and the proletarian revolution became necessary, since Marx did not consider any of the complex, historically determined elements—as for instance, the developmental stage of technologies in different societies and cultures (*ibid.*).

As mentioned above, Li regards the abstracted notions as a form of Kantian “transcendental illusions.” Kant has defined this kind of illusion as an illusion,

which influences principles whose use is not ever meant for experience, since in that case we would at least have a touchstone for their correctness, but which instead, contrary to all the warnings of criticism, carries us away beyond the empirical use of the categories, and holds out to us the semblance of extending the pure understanding.

KANT 1998, 385 /B 352/

For Li, these ideas belong to such conceptions of objects that can only be thought of, but not known, because they are formed through abstract thought without any empirical foundation. Hence, they are a kind of ideal illusions brought about by the transcendental reason. Transcendental illusions are still actively effective in guiding and organizing human thought, because they help us to achieve the greatest possible unity of reason (Kant 1998, 389). Concerning

kind of annulment is certainly tightly connected to his absolute negation of the idea of revolutions, based upon a theory of class struggle.

30 This conclusion is rather unreflected, for Marx uses the concept of abstract labor precisely to criticize the subsumption of concrete labor (performed by particular situated individuals) within the “real abstraction” of exchange value as specific to the capitalist logic of production. In short, abstract labor is not a normative, but rather a critical/descriptive category in Marx’s work.

this aspect, they positively encourage human capacity to act and to change the world. Hence, according to Li, they have a profound philosophical significance. However, because they are completely separated from the empirical life (i.e., due to their transcendental nature), they cannot be directly applied in concrete policies and strategies of actual societies:

The system of equal distribution that has been implemented in the past in our people's communes was such a case: it seemingly aimed to achieve justice and equality. However, because it has not considered or taken into account the multifarious other aspects and complex empirical factors, it resulted in stagnation and regression of productive forces. The economic wages were overall equal, but the living standard and the quality of life of the people were stagnating or even deteriorating.

列入以前我們人民公社所採取的工分制，就因為沒有考慮，計算其他方面的複雜經驗因素，貌似公正，平等，造成的卻是生產力的停滯和倒退；經濟收入大體平等了，人民生活水準和質量卻停滯或下降了。

LI ZEHOU 2006, 146

Therefore, Li does not criticize liberalism through the lens of such Marxian economic categories. He emphasizes that even though the Marxist theories and the Maoist praxis have offered the hitherto most coherent opposition to liberalism, their revolutionary experiments have produced the well-known, disastrous results, which is by no means a coincidence.

In present China, liberalism also represents a huge step on the path of achieving public reason and individual rights. Li explains:

For example, in China today peasants are free to move from their villages and the countryside to work in the city, choosing their own occupations and selling their labor. Graduates are no longer forced to work for specific organizations and in particular areas but rather are free to choose their own career and even start their own business. Such individual rights are taken for granted today but were difficult to imagine under China's planned economy a few decades ago. Whether the planned economy was reasonable and just for its time is a separate question. In any case, communist China's Reform and Opening is a historically significant, major social change, and while it may involve more direct control of labor by capital, it is certainly a step toward the ideal of having people fulfill their natural talents and represents an overall development of society as a whole.

LI, ZEHOU 2016, 1084–1085

However, since China is still a developing country, liberalism in China could also lead to numerous severe problems. At present, laws are not yet fully established in the country and people still lack awareness of their importance; if they can avoid them, they tend not to follow them. Laws are still not effectively implemented and enforced in China. In this regard, liberalism functions better in developed regions in which the prevailing modern social morality is already supported by firmly established law. Hence, when speaking about the infringement of morality, we cannot mix premodern and modern elements.

Particularly when speaking about China, one must be careful and analyze such questions in accordance with the conditions and circumstances specific to the country. In this context, Li once again emphasizes that in evaluating and making decisions in different situations, we should attempt to grasp the *du*, the dynamic “proper measure” by taking into consideration the tension between history and morality in order to provide suitable criteria and norms for the regulation and guidance of moral behavior (Li, Zehou 2016, 1091). Grasping the proper *du* in each situation conforms to emotion as well as reason. In this sense, it is tightly linked to the emotio-rational structure prevailing in the Chinese society and the culturally psychological formations of the Chinese people. At first glimpse, this method is similar to certain ideas developed by some prominent modern theoreticians of liberalism. John Rawls’s concept of “difference principle,” for instance, also aims to overcome static and universal codes of equality by emphasizing that inequalities in the distribution of goods and commodities can only be allowed if they bring advantages to the least well-off positions of society. However, Li emphasizes that there are major differences between these two methods, for applying *du* is not led by any emphatic factors guided by the idea of helping weaker social groups or individuals. Besides, the “difference principle” is rooted in purely rational considerations:

Rawls seems to talk very little about where the “difference principle” comes from. I think it may be an elevation of Roosevelt’s New Deal philosophy. Theoretically, it could also have originated with Kant’s idea of helping others. Kant’s conception here is not the same as rightist liberalism’s notion of philanthropy. From an anthropological perspective, such compassion is the duty of anyone living in a community. Without the weak, the strong cannot exist. The inter-reliance of their objective existences thus carries responsibility for such “help.”

LI, ZEHOU 2016, 1092

In Li’s view, the infiltration of emotion into these relationships of responsibility could certainly contribute to the social harmony (ibid.). On the other hand, he thinks that in a certain sense, the idea of the “difference principle” has been

implemented in China in the last decades after the economic liberalization. The basic idea of Deng's policy was to let certain strata of population get rich first so that ultimately even those in the underdeveloped countryside would also benefit. Such a practice could resolve some of the theoretical problems connected to the idea of a universal social benefit in spite of the absence of economic equality. However, the next step is "figuring out how to move toward fairer and more reasonable distributive justice and common prosperity. This requires a new theory" (Li, Zehou 2016, 1092). If we observe Rawls's theory of justice from the viewpoint of Marxist historical materialism, we can see that it is rooted in the conditions of modern economy. For Li, this pragmatic, materialist foundation makes its elementary paradigms quite reasonable and sound. In this context, he points out that thousands of scholars have analyzed and elaborated upon Rawls's theories, but almost no one has exposed this important point. Hence, he emphasizes that incorporating Chinese tradition and its concrete experiences into the modern economic life could lead to the establishment of just, free, and fair institutions, based upon principles of equality. Such a model could surpass Rawls's theory, but would necessary require a complex and deep theoretical discussion with numerous new and innovative ideas. Hence, he humbly states: "I can only point out this conceptual possibility" (*ibid.*).

A problematic aspect of liberalism is also its supposition that individual freedom is a "universal (necessity)," which is rooted either in transcendental forms or in some logical postulates, such as "natural human rights" or human nature. Rawls's concept of "original position" is such an example. Friedrich Hayek, on the other hand, does speak about "empirical traditions," which

arose from unintentionally conforming to certain traditional and largely *moral* practices, many of which men tend to dislike, whose significance they usually fail to understand, whose validity they cannot prove, and which have nonetheless fairly rapidly spread by means of an evolutionary selection—the comparative increase of population and wealth—of those groups that happened to follow them.

HAYEK 1988, 6

But in Li's view, even Hayek failed to see that such "empirical traditions" of individual freedom were not something inherent to the humankind but are products of modernization. They did not exist in precapitalist societies, including China. Hence, their allegedly "universal" nature still lacks theoretical proof and belongs to ahistorical presumptions (Li Zehou 2010, 39). In this respect,

Li still adheres to Marxist “economic determinism” and believes that their origin is in the socially incorporated development of industrial production. The acceptance and spread of liberalist ideas can therefore only occur in stable, economically secure societies. In China, they are gaining popularity, but this would not be possible without its current economic expansion and its widespread industrial production. Even considering this limitation, their alleged “universality” is problematic, because in different societies and cultures, liberal values can at the most serve as a framework of modern social morality, which is necessarily linked to different traditional religious moralities. They can function as public reason but by no means replace private consciousness or “private virtues,” for the latter are, in fact, the essence of genuine human freedom.

Another important problem clearly visible in American and European liberalism lies in the fact that the social reality in which it is implemented often contradicts the underlying theories. In American and European liberalism, each individual can freely choose whether to participate in politics. But because of their alienation from the mechanistic emotionless actual political systems, vast numbers of population do not choose to participate. The highly valued “freedom of the press” leads in reality to manipulation and artificial unification of people and to massive control over them. The enlightenment ideal of a critical and active human subject has resulted in the opposite, for the liberalist political system produces apolitical, ignorant men and women.

Liberalism propagates reason, but in fact, reason has become an efficient tool for irrational endeavors. It advocates individual autonomy but in reality, this autonomy has led to absolute alienation of the individual and to the enslavement of their spiritual lives. As regards their material lives, it has—due to the policies of noninterference and laissez-faire—led to a severe social gap between the rich and the poor and to oligopoly. Because different races, genders, cultures and religions cannot equally adapt to this kind of economic freedom, liberalism can also lead to tensions and conflicts. Since it is rooted only in formal, and not in substantial justice, it also posits weaker groups and individuals in deprived positions. With regards to its cultural and spiritual aspects, societies that are increasingly atomized because they take the individual as its core unit, bring about emotional indifference, interpersonal coldness, depressions, and spiritual emptiness. Even though people live under conditions in which their physical needs are basically fulfilled, their lives have no goals and their worlds are without meaning.

自由主義提倡理性，結果理性成了反理性的有效工具。自由主義倡導的個體自主，結果變成了個體全面被異化，成了對個人從心靈到生活的枷鎖和奴隸。在物質生活方面，由不干預即放縱的經濟自由貿易，使貧富分化厲害，加強了經濟控制下的寡頭話語權以及由於種族，性別，文化，宗教對經濟自由的適應能力不一而增大了社會生活的緊張和衝突。不問實質，只求形式公正使弱勢群體或個體出於不利境地。在文化—精神領域，以個人為本位中心日益原子化的社會，帶來的是人情淡薄，人際冷漠，心理躁動，精神空虛。在衣飾基本無憂的情況下，人生無目的，世界無意義。

LI ZEHOU 2010, 40–41

An influential result of these problems is a widespread revival of various kinds of irrational or antirational religious discourses, and also of new morally permeated political theories, such as the communitarian philosophy.

The liberalist view of the dispersed individual self as a basic unit and the supreme value of the society can actually lead to the mechanistically structured societies, consisting of “collectives.” In contrast to relationalism, which is an organic version of a community in which individuals are interrelated according to their social roles and positions, collectivism is a mechanistic addition of a faceless mass of discrete, atomic individuals. Friedrich Hayek acknowledged that the concept of individualism can merely serve as a methodological tool because its core notions such as the atomic individual, freedom, or an isolated self never existed in any historical, actual societies (*ibid.*, 42). But Li Zehou also emphasizes that a reliable social or political theory cannot be exclusively built on abstract concepts. This stands in sharp contrast to the Chinese system of society, which operates in accordance with the pragmatic reason and is always firmly rooted in history. However, even though communitarianism proceeds from a revival of traditional moralities and views community as prior to the individual, Li still believes that for contemporary China, liberalism is a more appropriate theory. Hence, liberalism should be established in China as a modern social morality that would still need to be regulated and appropriated by China's traditional religious morality. Traditional China was ruled by a mixture of religious and social moralities, whereby religion functioned as a force of shaping and controlling the people's inwardness. In this manner Chinese individuals were too oppressed, thus their social functions have to be strengthened by a new social morality that emphasizes their freedom and autonomy and simultaneously allows them to compete with each other in order to elevate the level of social wealth.

In Li's view, societies develop from social orders that are based on placing communal interests over the individual ones to those that are functioning

in accordance with the opposite principle, namely, the priority of individual interests over those of the community. Liberalism is based upon the latter principle without considering the former. Hence, it is ahistorical. Conversely, Communitarianism is grounded on the former principle and ignores the latter; hence, it is antihistorical. In China, the individual-based liberal social morality should therefore be tightly connected to the community-based traditional morality in order to develop a historically aware and simultaneously modern society.

For similar reasons, Li also disagrees with Sandel regarding the problem of value neutrality. Li certainly sees the dangers of promoting this value within the structures of unequal power relations. Sandel emphasizes that events which promote the revival of Nazism should be forbidden, but not the ones that oppose racial segregation. Analogously, he sees the intrusion of the market upon morality as profoundly interwoven with value neutrality. Li exposes that the problem with value neutrality ascends from the progressively universal and generally accepted ideas of good and evil that were shaped through the historical evolvement of humankind (Li, Zehou 2016, 1121). Especially in today's China, individual rights and value neutrality are important methods of breaking beyond traditional institutions that integrate politics and religion (*ibid.*, 1129). For both the Chinese and people of countries that are still developing their new modernities, such values represent pressing necessities in breaking free from the economic and political manifestations of their traditional societies. Hence, in Li's view, prioritization of rights, value neutrality, and individual freedom are needed for a just and humanist social development:

What is needed now is to affirm and reinforce such ethics, as at present we lack even formalistic aspects of rule by law and of law, equality, human rights, or freedom of expression in China.

ibid., 1128

Li sees such principles, which result from the economic life of modern people, as the moral content of the modern rule of law. He thinks that it is important for China that principles such as neutrality of values and individual human rights are abided not only by political and economic institutions, but also by individuals in their personal conduct.

According to Li, liberalism is therefore the most suitable political order for contemporary China, which still struggles with problems of modernization and its relation with the Chinese tradition. Although in its present form, liberalism was shaped and implemented by Western political theoreticians and philosophers such as John Locke, John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer, Friedrich

Hayek, John Rawls, etc., Li points out that similar ideas can be found in recent Chinese history as well. In his early works on Kang Youwei, the important scholar and political reformer from the late Qing dynasty, Li described him as a pioneer of a “Chinese style liberalism.” Of course, such specific kind of “liberalism” cannot be entirely compared to the Western style liberalism, i.e., the kind of liberalism that prevailed in the global modernization process. In Li’s view, Chinese liberalism was the fundamental idea that underlie the political movement of the “Hundred Days Reform” (*Bai ri weixin* 百日維新).³¹ The concept of liberty on which it was founded was tightly connected to tolerance, harmonization, and a strong aim to raise political awareness among the Chinese. With his “three phases theory” (*san shi shuo* 三世說),³² Kang aimed to reconcile the ideas underlying the reform movement and to appease the politically radical streams of thought within it. In his reinterpretation of this theory, Kang has unified certain core elements from Confucian and from liberalist thought (Li Zehou 2016b, 194). Unfortunately, this theory was forgotten after the unlucky downfall of the reform movement. Li believes that Chinese history might have

31 While the Chinese name of this important reform from 1898 was the Wuxu reform movement (*Wuxu bianfa* 戊戌變法), it is better known in the West as the Hundred Days Reform (*Bai ri weixin* 百日維新). Its initiator was Kang Youwei 康有為, one of the most interesting Chinese thinkers of his time. The other two central figures of the movement were Kang’s former students, Liang Qichao 梁啟超 and Tan Sitong 譚嗣同. Thoroughly convinced as they were that China could only overcome its critical situation through a radical transformation of its entire state administration, beginning in the 1890s the three reformers, through their *maitre de penseur* Kang Youwei, began to send a number of reform proposals to the government, even gathering the signatures of 1,000 candidates for the highest administrative exams for this purpose in 1894. However, only in 1898 did the emperor finally realize that China would only be able to resist against the foreign powers if it learned to use its own weapons against them. On 16 June 1898 the emperor invited Kang Youwei to his court and accepted most of his proposals. During this reform period, which lasted one hundred days, Kang, Liang, and Tan formed the new Chinese government. However, when they tried to deprive the conservative Empress Ci Xi 慈禧, of all decision-making powers, she reacted by stripping the emperor himself of all legal powers and throwing her disobedient nephew into prison, where he remained until his death in 1908. She then repealed the reforms and sentenced their authors to death. Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao managed to escape abroad (to Hong Kong, Japan, America and Mexico), where they would remain until the First Republic was established in 1911. Although Tan Sitong was offered the same protection and the possibility of foreign asylum by various foreign missions, based on his belief that sweeping social change needed martyrs, he allowed himself to be imprisoned and executed (Rošker 2019, 280).

32 According to this theory, positive changes of the society undergo three phases: seizing control over the chaotic period (*ju luan shi* 據亂世), establishing the period of peace and prosperity (*sheng ping shi* 昇平世), and the world peace (*tai ping shi* 太平世). Actually, this discourse was based upon a systematic theory of historical development of the ancient Gongyang school of thought (*Gongyang xuepai* 公羊學派), which was established finally by He Xiu 何休 (129–182), a scholar from the Eastern Han dynasty.

taken a different course if Emperor Guangxu 光緒, who supported the reform, would not have prematurely died (ibid.). In this regard, Li Zehou repeatedly emphasizes the importance of the coincidental nature of history. In his view, each individual has therefore a responsibility for shaping and influencing his or her time.

The Chinese-style liberalism that was first formulated by Kang Youwei includes all crucial general values endorsed by all liberal theories, such as freedom, equality, human rights, and democracy. All these values are rooted in the Kantian paradigm of “human beings as ends”:

Kang Youwei wanted to liberate the individual from the severe oppression of tradition, and especially from the yoke of family and clan domination. He wanted individuals to become independent, autonomous, and free persons, whom he called “natural people.” Is this not also an elementary idea of liberalism?

康有為要把個人從傳統，特別是從大家庭，大家族的各種嚴重束縛中解放出來，成為獨立自主，自由平等的個體，即他所謂的“天民”，這不就是自由主義的基本觀念嗎？

ibid., 198

However, Kang’s model of “Chinese liberalism” still differs from the Western-style liberalism since it entails numerous elements linked to the specifically Chinese cultural tradition. Li summarizes them in three central aspects (ibid., 1978):

1. **Historicism:** while most of the Western liberalist thinkers regard the abovementioned values as something natural or God-given, the Chinese model places them into a framework of a dynamic development of human history, which is guided by the evolvement of economy. Kang Youwei already emphasized that fundamental liberal values were products of modern industrial economies. However, in future, these forms of political-economic order can be replaced by other, more advanced ones. Such a view on social evolution is based upon the determinism (or necessity) of economic development. In this view, which is essentially materialistic, and places the postulate of human life on the highest level, Li sees a tight connection to the Confucian teachings.³³

33 To illuminate this aspect, Li cites the well-known phrase from the *Book of Changes*: “Production and reproduction of life is what is called (the process of) change” (生生之謂易) (Zhou Yi s.d., Xi Ci: 5).

2. Idealism: while Western liberalism is teleological, for its representatives see modern capitalism and liberal democracy as the best and ultimate stages of economic and political order, the Chinese model does not acknowledge the existence of such a final stage. Its pioneer Kang Youwei exposed that in Western societies, all these values were in fact established for the protection of private property, which is neither natural, nor God-given or eternal, and can hence be surpassed.
3. The classical Western liberalism is based upon the enlightenment values while the Chinese model is rooted in the emotion-based substance.

Li emphasizes that this form of liberalism negates the absoluteness of the radical liberal ideology; hence it has a potential to obtain global significance. He cannot and does not want to define it but claims that this Chinese model of liberalism contains elements of social democracy, post-Marxism and of the sinization of Marxism. Just like Li's entire philosophical system, this model also represents a combination of Marxism and Confucianism.

In this context, Li sharply distances himself from Mou Zongsan, who also wanted to establish a Chinese model of liberalism on a Confucian basis. Mou proposed to complement liberalism with Confucianism. He pointed out that the liberal voting system does not guarantee any moral qualification of the state leader, i.e., of the president. But Li Zehou highlights that in modern societies, the president must primarily be concerned with economic, and not with moral issues. In this respect, he points to his own theory of two moralities and the differentiation between public and private virtues. In his view, Mou's theory is dangerous because it aims to reestablish the traditional Chinese system, in which social and religious morality were intermingled and merged together (*ibid.*, 204). The realization of such a system would lead to a new oppression of the individual by the old, outmoded ways of traditional morality.

Humanization of Inner Nature

The previous chapter offered a critical introduction of Li Zehou's ethics in the field of political philosophy. In this chapter, we will turn our attention to the psychological aspects of Li's ethical theory, i.e., to the field that he denotes as the realm of moral psychology (*daode xinli xue* 道德心理學) in his *General Scheme of Ethics*. As the reader might remember from previous parts of this book, Li Zehou has assumed and upgraded the Marxist notion of the humanization of nature. While Marx has mainly concentrated upon the external aspects of this process, Li was even more interested in the humanization of inner nature (*neizai zirande renhua* 內在自然的人化). In his notion of the humanized nature, Marx has mainly emphasized the relation between human beings and the outward nature. In contrast to such a view, Li understands it rather as a process directed not only toward the external, but also toward their internal worlds, for both are constitutive parts of humanness in the sense of the traditional Chinese notion *ren xing* 人性. While engaging in the technical transformation of the external nature, humankind also transforms, modifies, and develops its inner nature. This means that the process of the “humanization of nature” works in two directions: throughout their evolution, human species humanize their external nature in order to make it a place suitable for their living. Through this very activity, they also humanize their own physical and mental constitution (Li, Zehou 1994, 177). Through such humanization of their inner nature, they became increasingly deanimalized, i.e., cultivated and hence better adapted to living in organized human societies.

In this process of shaping and establishing humanness, i.e., in the process of becoming human, ethics and morality are of utmost importance. Hence, Li emphasizes they are “that, which makes human beings human” (*ren suoyi wei ren zhi suo zai* 人所以為人之所在) (Li Zehou 2010, 3). In other words, they are “the substantial root of human beings” (*rende bentu* 人的本體) (ibid.).

In this context, one of the most important problems is the question about the origin and the structure of the free will; in Li's system, this concept belongs to the “substantial root of ethics” (*lunli bentu* 倫理本體) and represents a part of the cultural-psychological formation (*wenhua—xinli jiegou* 文化—心理結構) of the human mind. Morality is essential to the humankind, for no other animal possesses the ability to choose freely and to decide by virtue of reason whether or not to act ethically. This is the uniquely human free will,

which has been gradually shaped in the process of social practice through millions of years by humankind itself as a part of the human inwardness. Li also points to the important auxiliary function of moral emotions in this process.

In contrast to Kant, Li does not see the free will as something completely detached from experience, but as a result of a long-lasting process of transformation from empirical into the transcendental (*jingyan bian xianyan* 經驗變先驗). And, while Kant's categorical imperative does not contain any empirical elements, Li understands this notion differently, namely as a result of the continuous process of preserving the sustainable existence of the humankind, which is empirical in nature (*ibid.*, 13). On the other hand, through education and socialization, this "ethical substance" is being implemented into the psychology of every individual. This is what has been denoted as the cultivation of the Self (*xiu shen* 修身) in traditional Chinese culture. Li points out that it is already evident in the earliest Confucian classics. In these discourses, people are not born as complete human beings. In order to become truly human, they have to complement their inborn dispositions through the cultivation of self-control and through the implementation of rituality. Through this process of condensation of reason and the establishment of rational concepts of right and wrong or good and evil, rituals are of utmost importance. As we have seen in previous chapters, Li Zehou sees rituals as condensed patterns of productive and operative human interaction. They help people to develop and cultivate the "good" and to reduce or even eliminate the "evil" instincts and inclinations. Typically, this can be achieved through proper rational recognition of ethical concepts, ideas, and valuations.

While Li sees both aforementioned moral notions, namely the free will and the categorical imperative, as belonging to the inward principles of moral psychology, i.e., principles that were shaped on the level of special sedimentation (*wuzhong jidian* 物種積澱), he understands Kant's conceptualization of human beings as ends in themselves as being different. For Li, it is a kind of social ideal that is a product of a specific developmental phase in social history. For him, this postulate belongs to the realm of modern social morality (Li Zehou 2016d, 9). But even though it pertains to modern life in contemporary societies, representing an important basis of social interaction and state legislation, it can still be seen as part of the humanization of inner nature, for it has to be incorporated and internalized by individuals in contemporary societies as a measure established in the process of cultural sedimentation (*wenhua jidian* 文化積澱).

All the abovementioned elements are important parts of the process of humanizing our inner nature. Below, we will take a look into their general structure and their mutual intertwining.

1 The Shaping of Free Will and the Role of Moral Emotions

The concept of free will (*ziyou yizhi* 自由意志) has a crucial significance for Li's ethical system. As we have seen, in Li's theory the will is a part of reason. In contrast to the changeable ideas that constitute its contents, the will is an unchangeable mental structure constituting its form.

When describing and defining his understanding of the free will, Li first explains his view on the meaning of freedom (Li Zehou 2007, 307ff). He exposes that the notion of freedom is often vague, for it entails different connotations in everyday language, economy, politics, and philosophy. Especially in present time, the debates regarding freedom—along with the explosive recent development of cognitive and neurological sciences—became a topical issue. Like Schrödinger who claimed that it is possessed by quanta (Walter 2001, 23), numerous scientists think that artificial intelligence can also possess free will. Li points out that most of the scientific experts deny the existence of free will (including the one guiding moral behavior), for in their view all human actions are primary effects of the activities that take place in neurons and synapses of our brain. According to Li, such deterministic views are the mainstream in this debate.¹

Li exposes that the question of free will is an issue that is primarily related to the actual individual life in concrete reality. In this sense, it represents a social value and has no direct connection to the issues investigated by neurological science. In other words, free will is not a problem that could (or should) be investigated and solved by natural sciences. Rather, it is a question pertaining to philosophy and ethics. Here, Li draws attention to Kant and explains that according to the German philosopher, just like the existence of God or the immortality of the soul, free will is a *noumenal* transcendental illusion. It has nothing to do with concrete empirical existence of human beings and the phenomenal world in which they live—the latter is ruled by the law of causality. But *noumenon* is different: human beings can obtain freedom only in this realm, which surpasses the phenomenal world. The *noumenal* sphere is one of practical reason that exceeds the physical limitations of humankind.

1 Actually, the field still remains largely controversial. Since the beginning of the 21st century, we also witness important developments in the opposite direction (see Jarrett 2016). In 2016, the authoritative scientific journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* published a paper written by German researchers, entitled "The Point of No Return in Vetoing Self-initiated Movements" (Schultze-Kraft et al. 2016). In this paper, the researchers examined whether individuals had the possibility to veto an action after the exposure of the so-called readiness potential, which is an occurrence of unconscious electrical activity within the motor cortex, discovered with the help of the EEG, that takes place moments before a human subject performs an action. The authors found evidence that movements can be vetoed even after this potential had been detected (ibid., 1084). Scientists believe that this is proof of the existence of free will in human beings.

Li points out that Kant's concept of freedom cannot be understood as something belonging to the phenomenal world, which is determined by causal relations. As an object of observation, every human behavior is either an expression of reality or a reaction to it. Therefore, it is always being subordinated to a strict rule of causal laws. Here, we cannot speak about any kind of freedom. Li also points out that this is precisely the aspect that has been emphasized by the French materialists. They are convinced that all human behavior is mechanistically and necessarily guided by causal laws and that there is no freedom at all. Baron D'Holbach, for instance, was convinced that it was the same if a man was thrown out of the window or if he jumped out of it all by himself. He believed that both, the so-called will, and the external determination are equally effects of the same causal laws.

Here, Li is in line with Kant, who emphasizes that in such a case, all moral and legal laws would be completely meaningless. Blaming anybody for any kind of immoral act or crime would be the same as blaming a stone for falling down and hurting a human. In this case, any criminal could protect him- or herself simply by pointing to the fact that his or her behavior was a product of causal laws, a result of objective conditions. In this framework, all kinds of immoral or criminal behavior are necessarily determined by certain conditions, environments, individual characteristics, habits or customs, etc. In such a case, no one could be held responsible for anything and all legal sanctions would become completely senseless and redundant. Kant has severely attacked such mechanistic materialism. In its function of being a neutral object of cognition, every kind of behavior has definitely a reason. Since it happens in time, it is guided by the laws of causality. But when employed by subjects endowed with reason, these kinds of behavior become something completely different and must be evaluated according to the laws of the categorical imperative. Whatever a human being does in a sane state of mind is done under the guidance of his or her self-conscious will. In this sense, humans always possess freedom of decision and choice. One can either act or not act in a certain way. One can either follow the categorical imperative or not. Therefore, everybody is morally responsible for his or her actions. Although under consideration of causal laws, we can find reasons for any kind of behavior, the decisions and choices that led to this behavior are free; people can always freely choose whether or not they want to follow the categorical imperative.² Therefore, they are morally respon-

2 In this scheme, the objective conditions of any action can be seen as a necessary condition for its implementation. However, the implementation of each particular action cannot be seen as a one-dimensional result of these conditions. Hence, they can be seen as a cause, but not as the reason for actions, because human conduct always surpasses the realm of formal causality.

sible for all their actions. Irrespective of concrete situations and irrespective of various internal or external restrictions and constraints, one can always choose to act in accordance with the categorical imperative and hence, with one's free will. This is the uniquely human possibility to experience freedom. In this sense, human beings are different from machines and from animals. They are not confined to blindly or mechanistically follow the laws of causality. Precisely because we possess free will, we can liberally choose our actions and hence, we can be free:

Kant emphasizes that in their role of sensual beings who exist in the phenomenal world, people are confined to the conditions of time; in this realm, all kinds of human behavior, actions and motivations are only fragments of a mechanistic natural system, which is directed by a strict law of causality. But in their capacity of rational beings who exist in the noumenal world, human beings can become aware of the fact that they are not confined to these temporal conditions. Hence, the very same behaviors, actions and motivations can only be following rational self-legislation. Morality is superior to knowledge just as the noumenon is higher than phenomena. Freedom can be the reason to intervene in nature; therefore, Kant emphasized that "I can do" is because "I ought to do." "Can do" belongs to natural causality, but "ought to do" belongs to freedom.

Kant 強調，人作為感性現象界的存在，從屬於時間條件，他的任何行為、活動和意志不過是自然機械系統的一個部分，遵循著嚴格的因果規律；但人作為本體的理性存在，可意識到自己是屬於時間條件的，他的這同一行為、活動和意志只服從於理性的自我立法。而道德優於認識，本體高於現象，自由可以作為原因干預自然，所以 Kant 強調，我“能做”是因為我“應做”。“能做”屬於自然因果，“應做”就屬於自由。

LI ZEHOU 2008, 308

Hence, Li Zehou is convinced that autonomy and free will are ethical problems. They belong to the basic axiological questions regarding individual behavior that is carried out in the framework of collective sustainable human existence (Li Zhou 2018, 2). The corporeal or physical undertakings that result from neural activities, which are subject to neurological research, belong to a completely different domain.

Although we can find innate or external reasons for all kinds of people's behaviors and opposing choices, at the time they were made, these choices were of great ethical significance. Therefore, it is always necessary to determine whether the effect was positive or negative for the sustainable existence

of their social groups. In this sense, the “self-conscious choice” becomes the core of autonomy and the free will. Hence, Li agrees with Kant in his presumption that human beings cannot experience freedom without morality.

But on the other hand, Li’s view of this concept cannot be entirely compared to Kant’s. In order to show the difference, Li first draws our attention to Kant’s distinction between two different connotations of the concept of will. The first one (i.e., “*Wille*”) is the free will that refers to practical reason. The latter is called “*Willkür*” and is often translated into English as “choice,” or—more precisely: a “discretionary” or “arbitrary choice”³ (e.g., Kant 2001).

The ability to do or to refrain from doing something is a pure rational concept totally independent of objects. If this rational concept is combined with the conscious ability to bring about an object—end, by someone’s action then it is called a choice. If this rationality is not combined with this conscious ability to bring about an object—end by someone’s action then it is called a wish. The will, strictly speaking, is not the causation of choice; rather the will is practical reason itself.

KANT 1996, 4

As the power of self-determination, *Wille*, which is not a result of rational understanding, but rather a capacity of acting according to a conception of law, is the source of obligation. It is the practical reason itself, and therefore linked to the moral law. *Willkür*, on the other hand, is the capacity for decision or choice and belongs to the empirical sphere. It is both determined by *Wille* and affected by sensuous inclinations. It is the capacity to choose between the imperatives stemming from *Wille* and the desires or inclinations. Hence, *Wille* represents the transcendental and *Willkür* the empirical condition for freedom of moral behavior.

All moral philosophy rests entirely on its pure part, and when applied to the human being it borrows not the least bit from knowledge about him (anthropology), but it gives him as a rational being laws *a priori*, which to be sure require a power of judgment sharpened through experience, partly to distinguish in which cases they have their application, and partly to obtain access for them to the will of the human being and emphasis for their fulfillment, since he, as affected with so many inclinations, is

3 Sometimes, however, both terms are simply translated in English as “will” (see for instance Bunnin and Yu 2004).

susceptible to the idea of a pure practical reason, but is not so easily capable of making it effective in concreto in his course of life.

KANT 2001, 5

With such separation between the will as practical reason and the volitional capacity for choice, Kant aimed to set aside the traditional problem about the relation between free will and determinism (Bunnin and Yu 2004). According to Kant, the will per se is neither free nor unfree; it becomes free only in its inner connection to the principles of practical reason. In its autonomous capacity, *Wille* can thus be seen as the “practical reason itself” (ibid.). Similarly, *Willkür* can also only become free when following the moral will irrespective of any other empirical motives such as feelings, inclinations, or desires. In order to be free, it has to act by following moral obligations; in such a case, the subject has to accept the moral imperatives as the maxims of his or her actions.

Li sees *Wille* as the will of universal legislation and *Willkür* as the will of individual execution (Li Zehou 2018, 11). The former without the latter is empty, while the latter without the former loses its moral significance and cannot be established. Moral action can only be realized when *Willkür* implements the *Wille*, which consists of moral laws, as an executor (Li Zehou 2008, 307).

In Li's *General Scheme of Ethics*, which includes three basic elements that constitute individual moral behavior, *Wille* refers to ideas (*guannian* 觀念).⁴ Although from the viewpoint of the executor, this element seems to be an unchangeable, universal principle of legislation, Li points out that it is still a dynamic and changeable factor, modifiable in accord with different concrete cultures, geopolitical spaces, and periods of time. In his *Critique of Critical Philosophy*, Li has therefore renamed Kant's “universal necessity” to “objective sociality.”

Willkür, however, is different. In Li's schematic depiction of the three basic elements of individual moral behavior, it constitutes the will (*yizhi* 意志) as a relatively fix psychological form accumulated by human beings for millions of years, regardless of the changeable ethical norms prevailing in various human cultures and periods of time. For Li Zehou, it is the most important of the three elements, for it enables humans to implement moral actions. But even this

4 Here, we have to draw attention to the fact that in Li Zehou's *General Scheme of Ethics*, the concept of will (*yizhi* 意志) is mentioned twice. The first time it occurs as a part of reason, which is constituted by will (*yizhi* 意志) and ideas (*guannian* 觀念), and the second time as a part of internal individual morality, which is constituted by will, ideas, and emotions (*qinggan* 情感). In both cases, *yizhi* is comparable to Kant's idea of *Willkür*, and *guannian* to Kant's notion of *Wille*.

psychological formation is not an inherent natural instinct, but rather a result of long lasting human evolution and socialization.⁵

In this context, Li Zehou aims to complement Kant, who has fused the component of rational will in a sense of an inherent power to act in accordance with the categorical imperative, with the rationalized concepts of good and evil. In Li's view, this leads to numerous problems, for these concepts or ideas are changeable through different times and cultural environments (Li Zehou 2016b, 211). They cannot be generalized in a universally valid ethical framework:

Kant's universal legislation and his free will cannot serve as an external ethical norm. The premises of not committing suicide or not to lie cannot be seen as normative criteria valid for the whole world. They cannot be understood as historically unchangeable ethical principles and guidelines that are equally binding in past and present times. However, they can be seen as specific psychological characteristics, which appear in human moral behavior. One can believe that his or her own behavior can be universally legislated, and that everyone should behave in the same way. This is precisely what the free will is about: it is the self-aware, voluntary (autonomous) decision.

Kant, 這兩條普遍⁶ 立法和自由意志無法作為外在倫理規範, 如不自殺, 不說謊都無法成為放之四海而皆準, 歷史古今而不變倫理原則和行為準則, 但它們倒恰恰可以作為在道德行為中的人的心理特徵: 認為自己如此行為可以普遍立法, 即人人均應如此作為。這就是自由意志: 是人自覺自願 (自律) 所作出的決斷。

LI ZEHOU 2015, 196

5 The line of separation between dynamic ideas and relatively fixed mental forms is also often blurred. Some ideas, which prevail in societies for long periods of time—as for instance, the Confucian concepts of loyalty (*zhong* 忠) or trust (*xin* 信)—can also be sedimented in the form of mental formations, which can surpass concrete societies and diverse historical situations (Li Zehou 2018, 11).

6 At first glimpse, Li's transformation of Kantian concepts in this framework seems confusing, for he translates the notion of Kant's will (*Wille*) with the Chinese word referring to concepts or ideas (*gainian* 概念), yet he applies the Chinese word *yizhi* 意志 (which means *will*) to Kant's concept of choice (*Willkür*). Another problem might occur if we consider the Kant saw the choice (or *Willkür*) as something connected to the empirical domain, whereas the will (*Wille*) is a priori. But in Li's model, this basic schema is turned around: that which is a priori in Kant becomes completely empirical in Li's theory, and vice versa: that which is empirical in Kant becomes (relatively) transcendental in Li's system.

Hence, for Li Zehou, the distinction between the will (as a mental form of reason) and the concepts or ideas (as the concrete contents of reason) is of utmost importance. He emphasizes that even though they are not fixed and static, these ideas still represent an important element of human moral behavior.

The will is merely an operational power, which ensures that physical human actions are guided by the orders from the mind. It is an innate human capacity. However, it is the ideas of good and evil that decide what kind of orders a human being will follow in this process. In other words, the will is a self-aware, self-conscious capacity to establish a domination and guidance of reason over sensitivity. It is a mental power of rational form. The concrete contents of this rational form, however, are the ideas of good and evil, right and wrong.

意志只是一種使肉體行為服從精神指令的行動力量，是人的一種人性能力，但它服從於何種精神指令，這種精神指令是甚麼，便屬於善惡觀念了。也就是說，意志是人的自覺的，有意識的理性對感性的支配，主宰的能力，這是心理的理性形式力量，但這理性的具體內容是甚麼，便是善惡，是非觀念。

LI ZEHOU 2016b, 210

Even though in Chinese (and in Li's system as such), such a categorization makes sense, there seem to be some problems concerning Kant's own differentiation. In this regard, we could namely also follow the opposite line of thought and ask ourselves whether it would not be more concise to translate *Willkür* as *guannian* (ideas) and *Wille* as *yizhi* (will). Notwithstanding the fact that Li's translation can be misleading because the common (including philosophical) translation of the German term *Wille* is *yizhi*, we cannot ignore the fact that in Kant's view, it seems that *Willkür* (arbitrary choice) is the changeable, and *Wille* (will) the unchangeable element.⁷

Irrespective of the possible interpretations of both particular notions, the differentiation between these two realms (i.e., will as choice or will as ideas) is doubtless a crucial paradigm defining Li's ethical system. He demonstrates this

⁷ Li's interpretation or translation appears even less suitable if we consider the modern connotations of the term *Willkür*, for in its present usage, it refers to modes of individual or political (autocratic) behavior, which means to follow personal own desires and interests without consideration for others.

important distinction with the traditional Confucian differentiation between ritual (*li* 禮) and self-control (*keji* 克己):⁸

This can be shown with the phrase “controlling oneself in order to return to the ritual.” Here, “self-control” denotes the power of the will, whereas the concept of “ritual” in the phrase “returning to the ritual” refers to the ideas of good and evil. The “ritual” in the sense of the ideas of good and evil is changeable, but the “self-control” is unchangeable.

以‘克己復禮’來說，‘克己’是意志力量，‘復禮’的‘禮’是善惡概念，‘禮’——善惡概念有變遷，‘克己’却是不變的。

ibid., 211

Here, again, we must consider that it would also be possible to translate (or align) the two abovementioned concepts the other way around and interpret *keji* (克己 self-control) as the (unchangeable) will in the sense of a transcendental form, and *li* (禮 ritual) as the (changeable) arbitrary choice. In this line of reasoning, ritual would be comparable to Kant's *Willkür* and self-control with his concept of *Wille*.

For Li Zehou, Kant's free will as a dominant force of conscious choices of moral behavior is another proof for the fact that reason guides emotions (*li zhuzai qing* 理主宰情), which is an important presumption of his own moral theory.

But, on the other hand, Kant's interpretation of the free will is also linked to the question of “radical evil,” which cannot be found in Chinese philosophy. In Li's view, the absence of “radical evil” discourse in traditional Chinese culture is connected to its emotion-based paradigm. While the question of radical evil is rooted in Christian theology and is tightly linked to the concepts of original sin and the culture of guilt, the problems regarding the goodness or the evil of humanness (*ren xing* 人性), which were formed in traditional Chinese philosophical thought, were following a completely different line of reasoning. The former is a product of the two-world view; hence, radical evil is something that stands in direct opposition to the ultimate good. In Christian theology, its crucial germ is to be found in Eve's conscious decision to act in opposition to the orders from God. Hence, in this framework, the free will enables human beings to choose evil instead of good. In the Chinese one-world tradition, however, the ultimate good (*zhi shan* 至善) is not identified with God nor with ideas, the transcendental reason, or any other supernatural power.

8 In the *Analects*, both elements constitute the condition to achieve humaneness (*ren*): “To return to ritual through self-control is humaneness (克己復禮為仁)” (*Lunyu* s.d., Yan Yuan: 1).

In his *Anthropo-historical Ontology*, Li describes this ultimate stage of moral endeavors as being guided by the criteria of the sustainable preservation of the existence of humankind as a whole (*renlei zongtide shengcun yanxu* 人類總體的生存延續). In such a framework, there is no place for radical evil or the evil of human nature, for humanness is necessarily good.⁹ It is born anew with the birth of every single human being. Simultaneously, such a view represents a high-level affirmation of social life. This kind of ultimate goodness is neither a transcendental entity nor a purely biological instinct. In its various appearances, it is changeable and moldable, but it always remains steadily positioned into the greater framework of pragmatic reason, always achievable through socialization, cultivation and learning.

This transfer from the ultimate good, which is an effect of the sustainable existence of humankind, to the goodness of individual humanness, is of course also based upon a faith, or better, a general, basic trust that is also permeated with emotion. One feels that one's own existence is a good thing. To be born into this vast, unintelligible universe, is good in itself and therefore, I should be kind in my accidental little life. Such a setting can offer people a very positive and optimistic feeling about the survival and life in this world. This is also the basic significance of the emotion-based worldview (*you qing yuzhou guan* 有情宇宙觀), a notion that pertains to the co-existence of cosmos (nature) and humankind.

At this point, Li compares this ethical framework once again with Kant's distinction between the premises of "ought to do" and "can do." If there is a self-legislative "*Wille*," there must necessarily also be a "*Willkür*," the executive choice of action. In the Christian theology, the discerning instance that helps people carry out morally good and righteous actions is God. In Chinese philosophy,

9 In this regard, readers who are familiar with the Chinese philosophical tradition might object that according to Xunzi's line of thought, humanness (*ren xing*) is doubtless seen as evil. As is well known, he explicitly states that the crucial features or inclinations defining human beings are bad (人之性惡，其善者偽也). The character *e* 惡, which has in the history of Western interpretations of the Chinese ideational tradition mostly been translated as "evil" occurs in comparable connotations for the first time relatively late, namely, in the Confucian *Analects*. In earlier works, the contradiction or negation of the idea of goodness is mostly expressed through its simple negation *bu shan* 不善 (not good). Here, we should consider, for instance, the second chapter of the *Daode jing*, which states that the opposite of 'good' is 'not good' (皆知善之為善，斯不善已, Laozi s.d., 2). In this work, the character *e* 惡 is used in the sense of (aesthetic) ugliness. And even in later Confucian sources, the notion is mostly understood as a kind of bad inclination, which is directed against humanity and good life. According to most traditional dictionaries, its origin is linked to the semantic scope of a negative feeling (such as hate), to the aesthetic feeling of ugliness, or simply to mistakes in human conduct (see for instance, Xu Shen's *Shuowen jiezi*, 6844). Hence, we have to be careful not to confuse this connotation with the moral implications of the Western concept of evil.

there is no God. In Li's view, the emotion-based worldview replaces such supernatural instances in the guiding of individual moral behavior. It blends strong feelings of good and bad with the rational comprehension of right and wrong. In this sense, it helps people to transform "ought to do" into "can do." Here, the executive potential of the will (*yizhi*) is still functioning as the crucial driving force of moral behavior. However, the assisting role of emotions is also important.

In this context, Li also elaborates on the difficult and complex question of moral emotions (*daode qinggan* 道德情感). He begins with the question about the very nature of such emotions. Does this concept denote emotions that precede moral actions? Or are we talking about emotions that arise during or after the moral action? Concerning the first connotation, most people believe that they arise from sympathy or empathy. Li reminds us that Hume sees them as the driving force of moral action, while Schopenhauer believes they are its basis. In Li's view, contemporary moral sentimentalists are even more radical and even less compatible with Kant's rational deontology. Because emotions are unreliable and can be destructive or simply wrong, Li strongly opposes this stream of thought (Li Zehou 2018, 12). In this context, he always emphasizes the guiding function of reason over emotions.

Regarding the emotions that arise during or after a moral action, Li agrees with Kant by emphasizing that they belong to feelings of reverence or respect. In the beginning, the feeling is rather unpleasant, for it contradicts the elementary inclinations of self-interest and individual desires. But as soon as it is overcome through self-discipline and self-restriction, it can become joyful. Hence, people who act in accordance with deontological principles can experience a kind of spiritual, intellectual pleasure, similar to the aesthetic feeling of the sublime.

In this respect, we can also find a crucial difference between Li Zehou and Kant. Kant's "starry heavens above" and "the moral law within" both belong to the unknowable things in themselves and to the world of noumena, which exceeds the world in which people live. For Li, such a view is a cultural-psychological formation that was formed as a result of the "two-worlds view." In the originally shamanistic "one-world" culture, every attempt to reach the transcendental realm as something external to concrete human life must necessarily fail.¹⁰ Li acknowledges that he does not know the meaning or the reason for the existence of the starry heaven above us, but he believes that there is a very sensible reason for the existence of the moral law within us: it is the aforementioned sustainable preservation of the existence of the entire humankind (*ibid.*).

10 In this respect, Li is very critical toward the Neo-Confucian and Modern New Confucian efforts to establish a theory of immanent transcendence (see Rošker 2019, 130ff).

According to Li, the ancient Chinese culture of pleasure was based on such axiological presumptions. He repeatedly points to many examples for the awareness of this basic value and the existence of the free will in the Chinese tradition.

In China, we say that “virtue is established at the highest level.” This kind of uniqueness of each individual existence shows its incomparable brilliance. Such existence can only become possible through conscious and self-aware rational construction, which takes place in the framework of constructing subjectivity. This construction implies practice, behavior, and action, but also emotions, desires, and other sensations, which agglomerate in human reason (similar as in epistemology, in which the sensuous intuition is internalized into reason). This is the real free will.

中國古話說,「太上立德」,個體存在的這種一次性,這這裏顯示出它的無比光輝。而這卻只有通過人的自覺有意識的理性建構才存在。這屬於建立人的主體性的範圍。這是在人的實踐、行為、活動、情感、願欲等感性中的理性凝聚(如同在認識論的感性直觀中有理性內化一樣),這才是真正的自由意志。

LI ZEHOU 1994, 469

This is the real reason as to why “noumenon” of morality is superior to the “phenomenon” of knowledge. In exploring the basic characteristics of such a “Chinese version” of free will, Li begins with Mencius, who wrote:

Yan Yuan asked, “What kind of man was Shun? What kind of man am I? He who exerts himself will also become such as he was.”

舜何人也? 予何人也? 有為者亦若是。

Mengzi s.d., Teng Wengong 1: 1

This, in principle an extremely egalitarian view, which allowed all people to become as morally perfect and intelligent as the legendary sage-king Shun represents one of the most important heroes of the Chinese culture, was emphasized in many other passages of the *Mengzi*. For instance:

All things of the same kind are similar; why should we doubt it only in regard to man? The sage and I are of the same kind.

凡同類者,舉相似也,何獨至於人而疑之? 聖人與我同類者。

Mengzi s.d., Gaozi 1: 7

In contrast to numerous other scholars, Li does not value Mengzi for his theory of the four sprouts (of goodness);¹¹ more precisely, he does not agree with scholars who interpret the feelings underlying these sprouts as a kind of transcendental forms. In his view, some (but not all) of these feelings belong to biological instincts that can also be possessed by some animals. For him, Mengzi's greatest contribution to the development of Chinese ethics lies elsewhere (Li Zehou 2018, 13). Li believes that Mengzi's work mirrors and exposes the unique, independent, and autonomous personality of this pre-Qin intellectual, who has developed and described the specific free will, which is typical of traditional Chinese, especially Confucian ethics and morality. He upgraded and developed many original Confucian approaches, exposing the holistic nature and order of the world. He also pointed out the vital linkage between men and nature, emphasizing hereby its mutual organic interaction, empowered through the flow of the vital and creative potential *qi* (氣).

In Li Zehou's view, all these are relicts of the ancient Chinese shamanistic culture, in which the shamans were known for communicating with spirits through their inner heart-mind in various mysterious ways. Li stresses that it was Mengzi who rationalized these mysteries. This rationalization has had an extremely profound influence on later developments of Chinese culture. In Li's view, it is precisely that which makes human beings human. Li emphasizes that this is not something that could be solely achieved through some moral feelings, as for instance the "feeling of commiseration" (*ceyin zhi xin* 惻隱之心, *ibid.*). Hence, it is by no means coincidental that Mencius laid great emphasis upon individual moral self-cultivation. He demanded from people in highest positions to be morally accomplished and to fully develop their moral competences. This task demanded a harsh process of self-discipline. Mencius wrote:

They have to exercise their heart-mind and their will with suffering. Their muscles and bones have to experience the hardships of heavy work, and their bodies must experience great hunger. They must be subjected to extreme poverty. Their undertakings must be confounded. In this

11 The four sprouts (*si duan* 四端) are four inborn beginnings of goodness; they are based on four types of emotion that makes human beings human: "Whoever does not possess the feeling of commiseration is not a human being. Whoever does not possess the feeling of shame and dislike is not a human being. Whoever does not possess the feeling of modesty and complacency is not a human being. The feeling of commiseration is the sprout of humaneness; the feeling of shame and dislike is the sprout of appropriateness. The feeling of modesty and complacency is the sprout of ritual. The feeling of right and wrong is the sprout of wisdom." (無惻隱之心，非人也；無羞惡之心，非人也；無辭讓之心，非人也；無是非之心，非人也。惻隱之心，仁之端也；羞惡之心，義之端也；辭讓之心，禮之端也；是非之心，智之端也) (*Mengzi* s.d., Gongsun Chou 1: 6).

way, their heart-mind will be moved and they develop endurance and patience, something they could never achieve before.

苦其心志，勞其筋骨，餓其體膚，空乏其身，行拂亂其所為，所以動心忍性，曾益其所不能。

Mengzi s.d., Gaozi 11: 35

All such practices belonged to the cultivation of moral personalities, and they led to the establishment of a firm will, which is under the control of reason (Li Zehou 2016b, 176–177). Li explains that such cultivation led to the aforementioned “solidification of reason,” a process that is of great importance in his ethical theory.

Li also believes that Mencius has established the fourth element constituting the “structure of humaneness” (*rende jiegou* 仁的結構), which implies the free will.¹² These germs were developed further by many later Chinese philosophers. Here, Li specifically mentions the famous Neo-Confucian idealistic philosopher Wang Yangming from the Ming dynasty, who established an epistemological-ethical distinction that can be compared with the Kantian differentiation between “ought to do” and “can do”¹³ (Li Zehou 2018, 13).

In Li’s philosophical system, the notion of free will potentially belongs to the capacity of humanness (*renxing nengli* 人性能力), a concept that will be introduced in detail in later sections of this chapter. However, for a better understanding of this idea, we first need to illuminate Li’s theory of transforming experiences into the transcendental formations, beginning with the methodological foundations of this process and then proceeding to the specific features of its historical development.

12 In the Confucian discourses on humaneness, the free will has to be cultivated; hence, this fourth element, which includes free will, is defined as the ideal individual personality (*geti renge* 個體人格, see Li Zehou 1980, 77). The three other elements are the basis of kinship relations (*xuanyuan jichu* 血緣基礎), the psychological principles (*xinli yuanze* 心理原則), and humanism (*rendaozhuyi* 人道主義, see *ibid.*, 82).

13 In Li’s view, this distinction is visible in Wang’s theoretical construction regarding his theory of the unity of knowledge and action (*zhi xing heyi* 知行合一, see Wang Yangming 2018, 1: 5), for this framework is based upon his presumption expressed in the phrase *ji zhi ji xing* 即知即行, which means that one can act (“can do”) as soon as (or simultaneously with) one knows (“ought to”).

2 Transformation of the Empirical into the Transcendental

The question of gradual conversion of empirical elements into universal mental forms belongs to the key issues by which Li Zehou has altered and transformed Kant's views on pure and practical reason, on the very nature of perception and cognizance, and also on the autonomous human subject and his or her actions.

It is often claimed that in this respect, Li's theory can be considered as an upgrading or a completion of Kant's philosophy (Ding 2002, 248). Nonetheless, in terms of philosophical reflection, this can hardly be the case, because Kant himself has repeatedly warned against a mingling of the empirical with the rational.

I here ask only whether the nature of the science does not require the empirical part always to be carefully separated from the rational, placing ahead of a genuine (empirical) physics a metaphysics of nature, and ahead of practical anthropology a metaphysics of morals, which must be carefully cleansed of everything empirical, in order to know how much pure reason could achieve in both cases; and from these sources pure reason itself creates its teachings a priori, whether the latter enterprise be carried on by all teachers of morals (whose name is legion) or only by some who feel they have a calling for it.

KANT 2001, 23–24

Therefore, Li's aim to synthesize the two approaches (or disciplines) within this process of transformation is rooted in the holistic, "one-world" nature of Chinese philosophical tradition, the existence of which has not been acknowledged by most of the traditional European thinkers, including Kant himself:

That which mixes those pure principles among empirical ones does not even deserve the name of a 'philosophy' (for this distinguishes itself from common rational cognition precisely by the fact that what the latter conceives only as mixed in, it expounds in a separate science), still less of a 'moral philosophy,' because precisely through this mixture it violates the purity of morals and proceeds contrary to its own end.

ibid., 6

Irrespective of what one might think of such approaches, it seems certainly better and more suitable to categorize Li's ethical system as a theory, which rests on completely different paradigms that are not comparable to (and,

even less compatible with) the ones that determine Kant's referential framework.¹⁴ Instead of speaking about Li's theory as a system, based upon Kantian approaches, it could therefore be claimed that for Li Zehou, Kant's philosophy was but a valuable source of inspiration.

Hence, Li's "transformation of empirical into the transcendental" (*jingyan bian xianyan* 經驗變先驗) is not an element that could be directly compatible with, or even assimilated into, Kant's transcendental philosophy. It belongs to the process of evolutionary sedimentation, in which experiences of the entire humankind are being transformed into the transcendental forms incorporated in the cultural-psychological formations of each individual (Li, Zehou 2016, 1140). Li explains:

Ancient Greeks said, "Human beings are rational animals," and Franklin said, "Human beings are tool producing animals." I want to connect these two opinions and investigate how "the tool producing animals" became "rational animals."

古希臘說「人是有理性的動物」，富蘭克林說「人是製造工具的動物」——而我是要把這兩個定義結合起來，即研究人怎樣由「製造工具的動物」變為「有理性的動物」。

LI ZEHOU AND LIU XUYUAN 2011b, 77

The transformation of the empirical into transcendental is actually the precondition for the realization of both abovementioned defining elements of humanness. The concepts such as transcendental, reason, and psychological or mental formations are nothing mystical, for they are all derived from human experiences, and from the historical practice. These principles encapsulate Li's system of proceeding from Marx to Kant, from the instrumental (*gongju bentu* 工具本體) to the psychological substance (*xinli bentu* 心理成本體), and from the techno-social formations (*gongyi—shehui jiegou* 工藝—社會結構) to the cultural-psychological formation (*wenhua—xinli jiegou* 文化—心理結構).

Li exposes that this process of changing experience into the transcendental was especially clearly visible in China: in the Chinese tradition, reason was never only shaped as a part of epistemology, but always simultaneously as an

14 For a contrastive analysis and illumination of the crucial differences between the two referential frameworks that have defined Li's and Kant's work, respectively, see Rošker 2019, 254ff.

integral part of ethics.¹⁵ Hence, there was no sharp distinction between the pure and the practical reason.

As we have seen in Li's *General Scheme of Ethics*, this process of transformation started and ended in Chinese culture with emotionality and emotions, respectively. In this framework, reason and emotion were amalgamated in a specific mental formation, which he termed "emotio-rational structure" (*qingli jiegou* 情理結構). The ethico-epistemic structure of the empirical transforming into transcendental forms a part of the Chinese cultural-psychological formation, which always, i.e., on the universal level, represents an antipode (and a regulative principle) of the more basic techno-social formation.

The process of transforming the empirical into the transcendental can be seen as a kind of synthesis of empiricism and rationalism. In such view, all forms of understanding are *a priori* only from the viewpoint of the individual; from the viewpoint of humankind, they are derived from experience, and are therefore *a posteriori* (Li Zehou 1999g, 175–176), for they were gradually shaped through the practice of the human species over millions of years. This theory of "psychosedimentation" (*ibid.*) is comparable to Piaget's view, according to which forms of logic and mathematics, for instance, come from the abstraction of such practice-related activities.

Although there is hence no supernatural or metaphysical origin of human cognition, it is neither simply established in one-to-one correspondence by an empirical world. The transformation of empirical into the transcendental is a dynamic, nonlinear and long-lasting procedure, which evolves through and within human beings during the course of history, which takes place in their concrete and tangible world.¹⁶

The process of transforming empirical into transcendental offers human beings possibilities of consciously restraining their natural inclinations, instincts, and desires and adapting their behavior in accordance with social norms. It leads to the condensation of reason (*lixing ningju* 理性凝聚). In such a framework, there is no room for any isolated forms of pure, nor for any

15 Therefore, one does not have to reject and depart from one's everyday relationships with others and empirical existence in order to pursue the transcendent, the *a priori*, the boundless, and the substance, since these can all be found within actual reality and human relationships (Li, Zehou 1999c, 53).

16 According to Catherine Lynch (2016, 723), this is one of the main differences between the philosophies of Li Zehou and John Dewey. Li goes further than Dewey's instrumental understanding of the world because for him, human beings are exactly creatures within and of that world. Hence, his theory does not belong to pragmatism but rather to anthropological ontology.

independent kinds of the practical reason in the Kantian sense. Li's pragmatic reason (*shiyong lixing* 實用理性), on the other hand, is an assortment of both types; it is rational and practical at the same time and therefore, it belongs to both epistemology and ethics. Besides, pragmatic reason is not *a priori*, nor is it fixed or absolute:

It is close to reasonableness that is historically constructed and empirically approved. It can be termed as historical reason because it is attached to human history (i.e., the temporal process of the actual existence, living, and life of humankind as a whole), and thus comes into being and grows along with it.

WANG, KEPING 2018, 233

Through this transformative process, the sense experiences shape and transform reason, which is thus internalized, condensed, accumulated, and sedimented into the human mental forms. As each person becomes a member of the human community through a long-time education and training via rational faculty, their moral sense is the product of such condensation of reason, which dominates the sensational aspect of human existence and is a uniquely human characteristic. This elementary moral sense (*daode gan* 道德感), which underlies Kant's categorical imperative, can also be found in the philosophies of the Song and Ming dynasty Neo-Confucianism. Zhu Xi saw the categorical imperative as permeating the Cosmic structure or the patterned principle of Heaven (*tian li* 天理)¹⁷ and Wang Yangming described it as

17 Even before Zhu Xi's time, the concept of *tian li* was understood as an all-encompassing structural order of the universe. Zhu Xi described it as follows: "The structural principle of Heaven is all pervasive and endless" (天理固浩浩不窮) (Zhu Xi s.d., Li qi 1, Xingli yi: 41). *Tian li* did not merely include the essential ordering of the external reality, but also permeated the human mind (see Rošker 2012, 47ff). At this psychological level, it possessed moral connotations: "Since the structural pattern of Heaven is everywhere, there can be no evil!" (全是天理, 安得不善!) (Zhu Xi s.d., Li qi 1, Xingli yi: 53). It was a moral principle, which was seen as the oppositional notion to (and hence, a negation of) the concept of human desires (*ren yu* 人欲, *ibid.*, 55). In this sense, it was also used in the Neo-Confucian discourses, as for instance in Wang Yangming's note "Eliminating human desires and preserving the cosmic structure" (去人欲存天理) (Wang Yangming s.d., Chuan xi lu 1, 3, 11, 28, 99, 111).

the inner (or inborn) knowledge (*liangzhi* 良知).¹⁸ Such a moral sense guides human beings “to acknowledge the meanings, values and responsibilities of life as though they drop an anchor to locate a floating boat” (ibid.) and regulates human behavior from inward “without any resistance or disputability” (ibid.). It is transcendental, which means that it is an a priori formation of the human consciousness, but at the same time, it is deeply empirical. On the one hand, it is a product of concrete human historical development, and on the other, it requires sensations, emotions and feelings of respect in order to support actual human conduct. Hence, in Li’s view, elementary moral rules are formed by the empirical in the process of human evolution through which they develop into transcendental formations guiding human actions from within as they are self-consciously chosen by the power of free will.

In this framework, no transcendental form can exist independent of experience. The transcendental arises from empirical through sedimentation, and reason is therefore nothing mysterious, but rather something constructed from the historical practices of humankind. Through their formal qualities, these practices are sedimented into human psychological formations. As already mentioned, in Li’s view these processes are not only primarily linked to epistemology, but even more to ethics. The transformation of empirical into the transcendental helps us understand Li’s interpretation of the categorical imperative. Just like the Chinese concepts of the cosmic structure or inner knowledge, it is absolute and universal. Its origin can be compared to the shaping of religious moralities in which we can also observe a similar transformation from the social to the individual realm, for it represents a process leading from external norms to internal values.

18 Wang connected the structures of heaven (*tian li* 天理) and humanness (*ren xing* 人性) through the concept of innate knowledge (*liang zhi* 良知). See for instance: “The innate knowledge in my mind is congruent with the so-called structure of the universe” (吾心之良知, 即所謂天理) (Wang Yangming s.d., 11: 135). He defined the concept in the following way: “Knowledge is the substance of the heart-mind. A heart-mind knows spontaneously. When you see your father, you will naturally know (how to act in accordance with) filial piety. When you see your brother, you will naturally know (how to act in accordance with) the fraternal bond. When you see a child falling into a well, you will naturally know (how to act in accordance with) the feeling of commiseration. This is precisely what the inborn knowledge is about. There is no need to search for it outside. In the moment the inborn knowledge is discovered, all obstacles derived from private inclinations are gone” (知是心之本體。心自然會知。見父自然知孝, 見兄自然知弟, 見孺子入井, 自然知惻隱。此便是良知。不假外求。若良知之發, 更無私意障礙) (Wang Yangming s.d., 1: 8).

Originally, religious moralities were certain kinds of social moralities. Initially, they were common modes, standards, and criteria of conduct established by different ethnic groups and human communities in different periods of time and different regions, under different conditions in order to maintain, protect and continue their survival. Due to various subjective and objective conditions determining their environments, these social moralities had to appear in forms that exceeded society and human life.... However, these forms were often attributed to the deeds and speeches of legendary, great personalities embodied by people such as prehistoric shamans, ancient masters and priests, and even the early modern leaders. In this way, the empirical was transformed into the transcendental.

宗教性道德本是一種社會性道德。它本是一定時代、地域、民族、集團即一定時、空、條件環境下的或大或小的人類群體為維持、保護、延續其生存、生活所要求的共同行為方式、準則或標準。由於當時的環境和主客觀條件，這種社會性道德必須也必然以一種超社會超人世的現象出現 ... 但從遠古巫師、古代教主到近代的領袖，它又常常憑藉某種傳奇性的偉大人物行為、言語而賦以超越這個世界的嚴重的神聖性質，經驗便由此變成了先驗。

LI ZEHOU 2003b, 53

More concretely, Li explains this using the central Confucian virtue of family reverence (*xiao* 孝)¹⁹ as an example. It results from the period of the small-scale farming economy, in which the family clans were the basic social

19 This term is usually translated into English as “filial piety.” However, since it actually refers to a broader network of connotations regarding different family relationships, “family reverence” seems a more appropriate translation. Henry Rosemont and Roger T. Ames, who recently published a newest version of the *Xiaojing* 孝經 (i.e., *The Chinese Classics of Family Reverence*) wrote about this translation in their introduction: “*Xiao* has conventionally been translated as ‘filial piety,’ and to the extent that the pious are deferential, the term is not altogether misleading, for deference is certainly called for in the Classic of Family Reverence (*Xiaojing* 孝經). But it is to *people* living and dead in *this* world that Confucians defer, not to religious figures, usually associated with the Abrahamic traditions, who inhabit another, transcendent world. Moreover, ‘piety’ often carries a sense of the ‘sanctimonious’ that is absent from the Chinese *xiao*. Hence, we believe *xiao* is better rendered as ‘family responsibility,’ ‘family deference,’ ‘family feeling,’ or ‘family reverence’” (Rosemont and Ames 2009, 1).

unity.²⁰ Later, it was ritualized and spiritualized through shamanistic ceremonies and became a transcendental notion incorporated in concepts such as the aforementioned cosmic structure or innate knowledge. Hence, it became a kind of sacred categorical imperative that surpasses the human relationships in the concrete world (*ibid.*, 56).

Li has explicated the theoretical grounds of such transcendental notions with the help of his interpretation of Kant's epistemology:

Kant's "transcendental reason" is a uniquely human form of perception and cognition. Where does it come from? Kant has never answered this question. He merely stated that "transcendental" is prior to experience. With my elaboration on the problem of "how is the humankind possible," I have replied to Kant's question: "How is the faculty of thought itself possible." In this context, I have proposed the notion of experience transforming into the transcendental. The transcendental forms of the individual are shaped through the historical sedimentation of experiences. This kind of sedimentation belongs to my concept of the "cultural-psychological formation" ... Heidegger explained the famous Kantian problem of the unknown common origin of sensitivity and cognition as originating in the transcendental imagination, but I believe it is a result of producing and using tools, i.e., of vital practice. Sensitivity arises from individual sensitive experiences of practice, and cognition from psychological forms shaped by the practices of the humankind.

康德講“先驗理性”，是人所特有的感知認識形式。它們如何來的呢？康德沒有說，只說是“先驗”即先於經驗的。我用“人類如何可能”來回答康德的“認識如何可能”，也就是要提出經驗變先驗，對個體來說是先驗認識形式是由經驗所歷史地積澱而形成的，這也就是我所說的“文化-心理結構”... 康德那個著名的的感性和知性不可知的共同根源，海德格爾認為是先驗想像力，我認為是使用-製造工具的生產、生活的實踐。感性源自個體實踐的感覺經驗，知性源自人類實踐的心理形式。

LI ZEHOU AND LIU XUYUAN 2011, 77

20 In agrarian societies, farming-related experiences were precious. Hence, the elder generations were valued and worshipped as bearers of such experiences. Against this background, family reverence became important, because filial piety is an important and basic part of this virtue (see Li Zehou 2003b, 55).

In Li's view, this process of transforming experiences of practice and production into transcendental forms was developed in the Neolithic period through shamanistic ritualization. He emphasizes that reason (including the elementary laws of logic) is not a product of individual undertakings, but was rather produced and shaped in the course of collective activities and their ritualization which originated in shamanistic ceremonies and was sedimented through language and thought (Li Zehou 1999c, 508).

As regards the essence of mathematics, Li obviously differs from Kant. For Li, mathematics is different from logic, for it is linked to sensibility. However, this sensibility is not connected to Kant's transcendental intuition, but rather refers to the perceptual practice of the humankind. The origin of mathematics lies in the practice of its primitive activities, that is, in primitive operations of labor activities, characterized by the use and production of tools. In the beginning, these practical activities were concrete operations directed toward certain objects. Later they were transformed into symbolic operations incorporated into mystical forms of shamanistic ceremonies. In its essence, the universal necessity of mathematics is hence the universal necessity of the very form of abstracted practical activities of operational labor (*ibid.*, 94–96). Li sees the elements of formal logic, which form a part of mathematics, and the formal logic as such, as products of high-level abstraction, derived from the long lasting history of practical activities. The evolvment of such abstractions was possible because they were supported by social coercions (*ibid.*, 97–98).

Another important difference between Li Zehou and Kant is linked to their respective views on the nature of causality. Similar to the forms of logic, causality is in Kant's transcendental philosophy a category of cognition, i.e., a kind of transcendental form that is independent of experiences. In Kant's view, its origins cannot be explained, for they are merely one type of human rational cognitive forms, which exist a priori. In his critique of such a view, Li applies the Marxist historical materialism in order to illuminate the origin of these categories (*ibid.*, 171). He believes that they are uniquely human patterns of cognition that were similarly created through the long lasting evolutionary development of collective social practices (*ibid.*, 172). Hence, he comes to the following conclusion:

Categories are not results of the empirical induction of common sensibility (empiricism) nor are they derived from rational a priori deduction (Kant). They are not operational regulations (pragmatism), nor biological structures (Langer). They are not an induction of individual perceptions or experiences but rather are results of the internalization of historical

practices in human societies. Proceeding from the unconscious archetypes to conscious symbols and then to the abstract dialectical concepts, they were always established on the basis of the contents of such social historical practices.

範疇不是一般感性的經驗歸納（經驗論），也不是理性的先驗演繹（康德），不是邏輯假設和情感信念（邏輯實證論），不是操作的規定（實用主義），不是生理的結構（朗格）。它們不是任何個體的感知或經驗的歸納，而是人類社會的歷史實踐的內化成果。從無意識的原型到有意識的符號，到抽象的辯證觀念，都只有建立在這種有著社會歷史內容的實踐基礎上。

ibid., 174

On such basis, it is easier to investigate the grounds of Li's transformation of empirical into the transcendental. But before exploring these contents, we have to clarify some terminological questions.

In Kant's philosophy, the terms "a priori," "transcendental," and "transcendent" have different meanings. In his *Critique of the Pure Reason*, he explained the *a priori* knowledge as knowledge that does not rely on any kind of experiences. It means "before experiencing," and refers to necessary truths (or knowledge) that are independent of reason. Kant has also clearly and unambiguously defined the notion of transcendental:

I call all cognition transcendental that is occupied not so much with objects but rather with our *a priori* concepts of objects in general. A system of such concepts would be called transcendental philosophy.²¹

KANT 1998, 133

Here, "transcendental" means the necessary conditions for the possibility of every experience. Some *a priori* truths also refer to transcendental conditions, for example, time and space, basic categorical judgments, or the law of

21 This English translation of the first sentence of this citation could be a little misleading, for the semantic connotations of the term "concept" are too wide. The German original seems to be more precise: "Ich nenne alle Erkenntnis transzendental, die sich nicht so wohl mit Gegenständen, sondern mit unserer Erkenntnisart von Gegenständen, so fern diese a priori möglich sein soll, überhaupt beschäftigt" (Kant 1919, 68). In order to preserve the meaning of "*Erkenntnisart von Gegenständen*," the following translation seems more appropriate: "I call all cognition transcendental that is not so much occupied with objects as with the *mode of our cognizance of these objects*, so far as this mode of cognition is possible a priori."

causality. In his *Critique of Judgement*, Kant associated “transcendental” principles with “those, through which we represent *a priori* the universal condition under which alone things can become objects of our cognition generally” (Kant 1911, 181). Hence, the term transcendental refers to that which enables the human mind to constitute concepts and thus, to be able to experience them as objects. In contrast to everyday knowledge, which is knowledge of objects, transcendental knowledge is knowledge of how human beings experience those objects as objects. Kant believes that our consciousness provides us with structures that make this kind of experiences possible. The human mind generates both such structures and its own unity through a synthesis.

The term transcendence, on the other hand, refers to that which has surpassed the limits of physical existence and does not necessarily depend on it. The differentiation between the transcendental and the transcendent designates the boundary between theoretical knowledge and mere thought, for beyond all possible experience, we cannot have theoretical knowledge but can only think. For Kant, the “transcendent,” as opposed to the “transcendental,” is that which lies beyond what our cognitive ability can reasonably know. In this context, Li emphasizes the important role of experiences in the functioning of transcendental structures.

I certainly believe Kant has paid close attention to experiences. In Kant's theory, transcendental is different from transcendent. Transcendental is transcendental precisely because on the one hand it precedes experience, but on the other hand, it cannot be separated from them. Therefore he wrote at the very beginning of his *Critique of the Pure Reason* that all began with experience, but experience could not be equated to knowledge. Kant's transcendental categories tell us precisely this, namely, that there can be no science without experiences.

我認為康德恰恰充分關注了經驗。康德講先驗與超驗有區別，先驗之所以為先驗，一方面先於經驗，另一方面不能脫離於經驗。所以《純粹理性批判》開頭就說一切都要從經驗開始，但經驗並不等於知識。康德的先驗範疇恰恰要說明只有不脫離經驗，才能成為科學。

LI ZEHOU AND YANG GUORONG 2014, 125

Hence, in Kant's system, the difference between “*a priori*” and “transcendental” is obvious. In the Chinese academia, the term “*a priori*” is usually translated as *xiantian* 先天 and “transcendental” as *xianyan* 先驗. Li uses the term *xiantian* (which, in China, is predominantly applied as a translation of Kant's concept

of *a priori*) in the sense of “inborn” or “innate” (Li Zehou and Liu Yuedi 2017, 2, 8), a term, which, again, is usually denoted in Chinese with the notions *tianfu* 天賦 and *neizai* 內在, respectively. “Transcendence” or “transcendent” is usually translated into Chinese with the notion *chaoyan* 超驗. For Li Zehou, the difference between “transcendent” (*chaoyan*) and “transcendental” (*xianyan*) is also reflected in their mutual dialectical relation:

Transcendent objects must be applied in experiences to become “transcendental.” Without a connection to experience, there can be no “transcendental” ... For human beings, transcendence has positive and negative aspects.

超驗的東西，必須應用到經驗上來，才是 “先驗”，擲不到經驗上面來，那就不算 “先驗” ... 超驗對人有正負兩方面的作用。

LI ZEHOU AND LIU YUEDI 2017, 7

He exposes that the realm of transcendence is illusionary but it still has a positive influence on people, for it provides them with ideals and enhances their activity (ibid., 8). On the other hand, he points out that, due to his two-world paradigm, Kant's *noumenon* also belongs to transcendent notions:

For him, *noumenon* and reason are without origin and they are simultaneously higher than humankind. Hence, we can speak here about a two-world view. However, I have established a different concept of the thing-in-itself. For me, it is material substance that exists as a synergetic interaction between the universe and human beings. Such a conceptualization is directly linked to my “one-world view,” in which both of them are parts of one world. Since they still belong to this one and the same world, this is not a contradiction.

他那個本體，他那個理性，是沒有來源的，而且高於人類的。從而可說是兩個世界。而我所設定的物自體，是宇宙與人協同共在的物質實體，與我的 “一個世界” 觀直接相通，所以毫無矛盾，仍然是一個世界。

ibid.

In such a context, it becomes clear that Li understands and applies Kant's notion of transcendental in a different way. In a one-world paradigm, transcendence in the sense of surpassing one world and existing in another is

impossible. Hence, Li concludes that in Chinese philosophy, there is no transcendence (*chaoyan* 超驗) but detachment (*chaotuo* 超脫):²²

In a philosophical sense, we can only speak about detachment in China (which means that people can surpass the limitations of their individual life). There can be no transcendence (in the sense of surpassing the realm of the experiences of the humankind).

從哲學上, 中國人只是超脫 (超脫此有限的個體人生) 而不是超驗 (超出人類經驗範圍)。

LI ZEHOU 2016, 36

But while the Chinese one-world paradigm cannot include transcendence (*chaoyue* 超越), it certainly includes a kind of transcendental (*chaoyan*). Li's conceptualization of transforming the empirical into the transcendental is a processual account of the elementary construction of such transcendental. In this framework, Li has tried to elaborate on some of Kant's central concepts. In this process, he aimed to replace certain "problematic" definitions of such concepts with others that have—in his view—better expressed their positioning into the schema of a processional, dynamic and materialistic-historical development. A good example of such minor (but important) shifts in the semantic connotations of Kant's terminology is, for instance, visible in Li's specific understanding of the term "universal necessity":

Kant claims that mathematics is valid everywhere. This is what he sees as the universal necessity. And he emphasizes that his idea of "transcendental" implies universal necessity. I am against such understanding. In my book *Critique of the Critical Philosophy* I have explained universal necessity with the notion of objective sociality (or social objectivity), which can even include mathematics and logic ... This is because experiences are always specific and they cannot be universal.

康德講, 數學到哪裡都行, 普遍必然. 講的就是這個. 康德講的 "先驗", 主要是強調它有普遍必然性. 也正因為此, 我反對這種絕對的 "普遍必然", 《批判》一書把康德的普遍必然性都解說成客觀社會性 (或社會客觀

22 In this context, Li Zehou—once again—exposes the "absurdity" of the notion of immanent transcendence, emphasizing that Kant himself also saw it as "a paradoxical theory, which mixes together gods and people" (是神人混同的悖論) (Li Zehou 2016, 37).

性，甚至包括數學和邏輯 ... 因為，經驗是個別的，經驗都不是普遍必然的。

ibid.

However, in his epistemological treatises, Kant did not speak about experiences as something concrete and specific; rather he wrote about them on the level of theory. In this context, Kant has attempted to describe the function they assume as a general factor within the universal mode of the construction of human knowledge. Li, on the other hand, writes about experiences *in concreto*. While in Kant's view, experiences are only seen as tools for inducing sensual impressions that stand at the beginning of any perception and comprehension, Li emphasizes their particularity, uniqueness, and their specific but continuous impact upon the shaping of the human mind. Against this background, the terms "objective sociality" is not necessarily in mutual contradiction with the notion of universal necessity, for they do not exclude (and might even complement) one another. Hence, Li did actually not replace "universal necessity" with "objective sociality"; by employing the latter term, he merely exposed the social and historical nature of the former:

There are exceptions to any law, but this does not harm their "universal necessity," because the so-called universal necessity is actually objective sociality.

規律總有例外，但並無損它的‘普遍必然’，因為所謂普遍必然性也不過是客觀社會性。

LI ZEHOU 2003b, 32

In such a framework, reason can only be constructed by and through the historical development:

In fact, the "universal necessity" is a historical objective sociality. It does not surpass human activities, the scope of their thinking, including their investigations of the universe and the nature. Besides, it necessarily includes the observer or the experiencing person. Reason is constructed by and through history and its foundation is rationality.

所謂‘普遍必然性’其實就是歷史的客觀社會性，它不越出人類活動、思維範圍，包括對宇宙、自然的研究，也以觀察者或經驗的人為其不可或缺的要素或方面。理性是歷史地建立起來的。理性的基礎是合理性。

ibid., 43

Li established the term “objective sociality” in the 1950s. He mentioned it for the first time in his first important essay, “On the Aesthetic Feeling, Beauty and Art” (1956), in which he stated that aesthetic feeling—and even beauty as such—is socially determined (Li Zehou 1956, 45). However, he applied this view to reinterpret Kant’s universal necessity much later in his book, *Critique of the Critical Philosophy—A New Approach to Kant*, in which he aimed to posit Kant’s thing-in-itself onto a material basis (Li Zehou 1990, 162ff and 263ff):

Kant’s philosophy has utterly exposed the structure of human psychology—including the *a priori* nature (universal necessity) of human cognizance, ethics, and aesthetics. This book aims to assess the modern significance of Kant’s proposal regarding this problem. It aims to show a new direction in its understanding and explaining. This is precisely the critique of Kant’s “critical philosophy.”

康德哲學...全面提出了主題心理結構—包括認識, 倫理和審美的先驗性 (普遍必然性) 問題。本書目的就是特別看重康德所提出的這個問題的現代意義, 以及了解和決解這個問題的新方向。這就正是本書對康德“批判哲學”的批判。

ibid., 267

In Li’s broader theoretical system, the transformation of empirical into transcendental represents the core element of Li’s “three teachings” (*san ju jiao* 三句教). The other two postulates that what constitute this threefold model are “the creation of reason through history” (*lishi jian lǐxing* 歷史建理性) and “psychology grows into substance” (*xinli cheng benti* 心理成本體). The former emphasizes that rationality is integrated into mental forms through the historical process of human practices that leads to the condensation and sedimentation of reason. On the other hand, reason is valuable and meaningful only when it is employed as a tool for human living (Wang, Keping 2018, 234). The latter teaching is rooted in a presumption, comparable to Heidegger’s philosophy of *Dasein*. In Li’s theoretical model, human psychology, including feelings, is seen as possessing an “ontological” quality because it enhances the substance of human life (ibid.).

In the transformation of empirical into transcendental, reason can—as we have already seen above—only be constructed through the social and material objective nature of historical development, because it is derived from human experience. Through condensation, it is amalgamated with emotion into the emotio-rational structure (*qingli jiegou* 情理結構) of the human mind. In this model, in which no transcendental formations can exist completely detached from experiences because they are constituted and shaped through

sedimentation of historical practice, reason is constructed through the historical activities of practice, which is then integrated into mental structures, in which the techno-social formation (*gongyi shehui jiegou* 工藝社會結構) is complemented by the cultural-psychological formation (*wenhua xinli jiegou* 文化—心理結構). Just as the first postulate (transformation of the empirical into the transcendental) of this triple teaching conditions the second (construction of reason through history), the second in turn enables the realization of the third, namely, the postulate of psychology growing into substance (*xinli cheng benti* 心理成本體).

Contemporary Chinese scholar Yang Guorong 楊國榮 comments on this third postulate, which he considers as being of utmost importance. He believes that with this idea, Li has highlighted the essential significance of the inner substance, or to put it in a more sinicized form, the inner substantial root (*neizai benti* 內在本體). He suggests, however, that in this context we should consider the “existence of psychology within the substantial root” (本體存心理), which refers to the inner nature of the substantial root as such. According to him, the universal substance possesses a logical form that has also been integrated into individual mental forms. From the viewpoint of moral practice, this simultaneously refers to the inner mechanisms of moral conduct: the “existence of psychology within the substance,” which includes the amalgamation of universal rational forms with emotion and meaning. In such a way, it provides us with inner instruments for moral actions (Li Zehou and Yang Guorong 2014, 127).

Even though Li agrees with this aspect of human psychology, he emphasizes the material origins of psychological substance, which, in his view, represents an important part of humanness. The psychology of humanness was formed after human beings left the animal world (Li Zehou 2016, 474). It arose from various material and spiritual activities performed by people living in different social communities. In the early Neolithic history, humanness was shaped through material practice and shamanistic rituals. In the advanced course of historical development, mental formations were further developed, enriched and enhanced through the continuous evolvement of cultural inheritances. Gradually, they became increasingly universalized as a common feature of the humankind. In Li's view, the psychology of humanness by no means *a priori*, neither is it a product of ideas provided by sages and prophets.

In this process of establishing the psychological substance of humanness, the role of communities was of utmost importance. However, Li also highlights that communities consisted of individuals who were not entirely dependent and determined by them. Individual functions, positions, and creativity contributed immensely to the further development of societies. Their particular activities and deeds have often challenged and modified the existing

sedimented structures of human beings. The general progress of humankind is hence based upon a dialectical interaction between individuals and societies (ibid.). Li denoted this kind of psychological substance, which was constructed through the historical evolvement of humankind, as “the new sensitivity (*xin ganxing* 新感性)”:

This is still an animalistic biological sensitivity, but it differs from the animalistic psychology. It is a product of “humanizing” the corporeal, i.e., biological sensitivity of the humankind. This is precisely what I mean by the so-called “humanization of the inner nature.”

它仍然是動物生理的感性，但以區別於動物心理，它是人類將自己的血肉自然即生理的感性存在加以“人化”的結果。這也就是我所謂的“內在的自然的人化”。

ibid.

Hence, as we have seen, Li’s “three teachings” regarding the establishment and development of the humankind are interconnected and condition one another. While the human psychological substance grows from the conditions that are tightly linked to the first postulate, i.e. to the construction of reason through history, the evolvement of elements in which “psychology grows into substance” is conditioned by the transformation of the empirical into the transcendental. This transformation thus represents the elementary, primary and most basic process of human development. In this context, we (once again) have to be aware of the fact that such assessment is possible only in a radically dynamic and processual understanding of reality. Only in such a framework of transforming empirical into the transcendental can reason be constructed by and through history, and human psychology can grow into substance.

3 The Forgotten Significance of Rituality

As we have seen in the previous section, the transformation of the empirical into the transcendental is tightly linked to the transformation of social to religious moralities, which occurred in the earliest human communities. Simultaneously, a shaping of religious moralities also represents a process leading from external norms to internal values, and from the social to the individual realm.

Given the various environments and the subjective nature of their conditions, social ethics must appear as a phenomenon that transcends society and the human world. The beginning of these processes, which led to the formation

of religious moralities, was the abstraction, symbolization and universalization of moral principles, norms, and cultivation methods that were originally rooted in the phenomenal world.

Just like the social moralities, religious moralities also vary in accordance with the specific times, geographical locations, and cultures in which they were established. Under these different conditions, religious moralities were always particular types of shared standards, principles or methods, enabling human beings to maintain, preserve, and extend the existence of their communities.

In such a way, morality began as a principle of maintaining stable human interaction in a community. It has constantly being formed and developed to fit the particular social environments, which were always continuously changing. It was not designed as a set of customs established by people in a conscious way. Worldly customs, regulations, rules and experiences were taken in in the light of sacredness, and became doctrines, a kind of absolute power that cannot be escaped by communities and neither by individuals living in them. Such doctrines demanded their absolute belief, submission, reverence and respect. They included external pressures, which ordered people to follow certain ethical norms and procedures. These norms were then integrated and formed internal moral consciousness, concepts and emotions. In this way, ethics (in the sense of external demands, requirements, and institutions) was transformed into morality, rooted in internal psychological formations and the free will.

Li Zehou explained this process as one which leads from the rituals (*li* 禮)²³ to humaneness (*ren* 仁). In the course of this transformation, the capacity of humanness (*ren xing* 人性) moves from experience to the transcendental, from habit, tradition, and education to common mindset. In his view, Confucius's historic achievement was his transformation of the shamanistic rituals of the primeval past into the internalized principle of humaneness, a mission that was continued by Mencius. Eventually, the self-disciplining of the individual became more important than external social constraints. This emphasis on inner self-cultivation gave rise to the formation of what Li calls the typical

23 Li Zehou translates the character *li* 禮 with the notion »ritual«. However, we must not forget that "it is at least beyond doubt that the semantic field of *li* cannot be grasped by any single Western notion ... The common English translations of *li* as 'rites' or 'rituals,' while certainly in some cases applicable, can be misleading and are without any doubt far too narrow" (Sigurðsson 2015, 12). Roger Ames, for instance, opts for referring to *li* as "propriety in one's roles and relations," because such an understanding does not reduce the term to generic, formally prescribed 'rites' or 'rituals' performed at stipulated times to announce status and to punctuate the seasons of one's life (Ames 2011, 173).

cultural-psychological formation of Chinese consciousness, which was completed by Han times (Chong 1996, 155).

In the course of such development, rituality is thus of crucial importance. At the beginning, rituals arose from human experiences, customs and natural emotions of desire, fear, love, aversion, delight, sorrow, anger, etc. Through ritualization and rationalization, they formed social, political, and ethical regulations, which in turn educate, refine, transform and nurture natural emotions to fit everyone's social status (Jia Jinhua 2018, 172).

Geir Sigurðsson points out (2015, 12) that while ritual (*li* 禮) is one of Confucius's most discussed notions and an integral component of the entire Confucian tradition, the term itself does not owe its origins to the Confucians:

Initially, it belonged to no particular school of thought and is by convention believed to signify ritual actions enacted by royal families during the first three Chinese dynasties of Xia, Shang, and Zhou in order to please the spirits. During this course of these dynasties, the notion gradually received a much wider reference, and has since then been expanded, deepened, and modified in a multiplicity of ways by Confucius and his followers and commentators up until the present day.

ibid.

Li Zehou also exposes that in China, the Confucian rituals were developed from the Neolithic shamanistic ceremonies. Following the tradition, established by the Duke of Zhou (Zhou Gong 周公 or Zhou Dan 周旦), Confucius was in Li's view a "transformative creator" (*zhuanhuaxinde chuangzaozhe* 轉化性的創造者)²⁴ who has importantly adjusted the long-lasting shamanistic tradition, which dominated in China at the verge of the Zhou dynasty. In this way, shamanistic ceremonies were converted into a system of rites, which formed the crucial basis for Confucian rituality. This rituality is documented in numerous Confucian classics:

The classics of the Songs, the Documents, the Rituals, and the Music are the most important components of the Zhou rituals. They originate from human life and natural emotions, but they are not just a copy of human experience. The raw sources are arranged, ordered, and patterned by the sages and cultural heroes to become social, ethical regulations. These regulations are in turn used to educate people and foster their

24 Li Zehou inverted Lin Yusheng's 林毓生 idea of "creative transformation," in the reversed phrase "transformative creation."

role emotion and moral character to reach consummation. In other words, natural emotions should be refined and regulated by the modes of music and ritual, in order to develop ideal character traits and high moral virtues.

JIA JINHUA 2018, 173

Li emphasizes that according to the *Guodian bamboo slips* (*Guodian Chu mu zhu jian* 郭店楚墓竹簡)²⁵ “rituals were generated from emotionality” (*li sheng yu qing* 禮生於情). He also points out that from the viewpoint of history, shamanistic rituals that were rationalized and later transformed into Confucian rites did not directly ascend from individual emotions (Li Zehou 2015, 11). Shamanistic rituality arose from and was based upon forceful factors of collective emotionality that widely exceeded the individual feelings. In Li’s view, shamanistic ritual practices have involved various elements of powerful communal emotional commitment. These emotions were predominantly rooted in the existential circumstances of social communities and groups to which the individuals who took part in these ceremonies belonged. As we have seen in the previous sections of this book,²⁶ rituals ordered, systematized and categorized these collective situational emotionality, a process that then led to the condensation of reason as a part of the human emotion-rational structure. In this formation, reason guides and influences individual emotions, which arise and are shaped in this process. Although early Confucianism had broken with the magic and mythical form of the Rites of Zhou, it had maintained the ritual focus on the ruler that was characteristic for shamanism, transforming his magical powers into moral ones (Chong 1996, 173).

In this paradigm, “heaven, earth, and the myriad things all reside within specific and concrete circumstances of emotionally interactive relationality” (Li Zehou 2016b, 1099–1100). Such a view contrasts essentially from the accent on logos, reason, and logic that later determined the prevailing streams of Western thought. This kind of “interactive relationality” has been preserved in the predominant Chinese cultural and ideational standards. It is grounded in the human capability of emotional responsiveness (*gan* 感), which empowers people to act not only in resonance with the cosmos, but also in harmony with other members of their own community (Rošker 2019, 107). On such a basis that is founded on the Chinese shamanistic historical tradition (*wushi chuantong* 巫史傳統), Confucius later managed to formulate his teachings as a kind of “emotional cosmology” (*you qing yuzhou guan* 有情宇宙觀).

25 These bamboo slips were excavated in 1993 in the Guodian tombs in the Hunan province and published in a restored form in 1998.

26 See particularly the section entitled “Historical and developmental foundations: from *qing* 情 as collective emotionality to *qing* 情 as individual emotion.”

In the shamanist cultures, sacred ceremonies not only gave symbolic form to such emotionality but also to many other manifestations of human existence, life, and consciousness. They shaped and ordered primeval, muddled experience. Hence, they belong to the earliest forms of human spiritual civilization and symbolic production. Shamanistic ritual activities enabled the sustainable existence of the community, maintaining the rational character of the social collective (Li, Zehou 2010, 4). These kinds of symbolic cultural activities were practical as well as conceptual. On the one hand, they involved the cooperative material (or physical) activity of the collective, but on the other, their main effect was on human thought and consciousness. In this respect, rituals were qualitatively different from all other activities related to material production (such as hunting or agriculture), which directly produced material objects.

Chinese models of ritual were universal and sacred; already in the very beginning, they were conducted by social elites of shamanist cultures. Even the oldest Chinese texts affirm that communal totemic dance and magical ritual have an early origin, a long history, and display a variety of patterns, later even acquiring specialists (shamans or master dancers) to lead or instruct in such matters²⁷ (*ibid.*, 5). As we have seen, they originated from experiences and emotions and also from the customs of early Neolithic societies. In performing rituals, different individual sensuous existences and feelings were consciously woven together and melded into a unity. Early rituals stimulated and fostered the beginnings of a sense of the collective and of order in human action and thought. This led to the standardization of individual emotions and even to the shaping of thought patterns. Such a regularization and social generalization was based in the assumed order of the spiritual world, reestablished and reflected through the magical arts and the religious imaginary (*ibid.*), which held the sprouts of intellectual activity while simultaneously permitting the expression of human instinctual emotion.²⁸

In this process, the natural senses and the biological emotions were melded with the requirements, principles, and norms of socialization in a

27 According to the *Shuo wen* dictionary (see Xu Shen s.d.), the shamans were “able to communicate with the formless, and bring down the spirits with their dances, as when people assemble for the rain dance” (能事無形，以舞降神者也。象人兩袂舞形。)(See Xu Shen s.d., 3018).

28 In such ritual procedures, dance was an important method of bridging the chasms between this world and the realm of spirits, demons and deities. In this context, Li Zehou often refers to the work of Susanne Langer, who has commented that in early shamanist societies, dance was “the most serious intellectual business” (Langer 1953, 190). It offered the human beings an “envisagement of a world beyond the spot and the moment of one’s animal existence, the first conception of life as a whole—continuous, super-personal life, punctuated by birth and death, surrounded and fed by the rest of nature” (*ibid.*).

mutually influential interaction in which the disparate elements become indistinguishable.

Here we see the expression and release of the natural and animalistic aspects of the individual person, and at the same time the beginnings of his/her "humanization." With the infusion of sociocultural elements, the animal psyche is transformed into a human psyche. All kinds of human psychological functions—imagination, cognition, comprehension, and other intellectual activity—sprout and develop, all the while retaining their connection to and intermingling with basic animalistic psychological functions like perception and emotion.

ibid., 6

As we have seen, these ritual procedures led to the creation of psychological formations that were gradually shaped and sedimented in the course of history, and were structured as the fusion of rational and sensitive elements within the human psyche. On the level of external standardization, these processes have led to the rational internalization of regulations that determined human behavior or, in other words, to the rational condensation of collective demands and purposes. In this way, moral dictates were developed from primeval taboos. Hence, rituals have led to the formation of humanness. In this context, the role of cultural forms is of crucial importance, because, in Li's view, the cultural gives specific form to the psychological (ibid., 7–9).

These cultural forms and the binding nature of ritual prescriptions as such were enhanced in the course of the institutionalization of rituality. In China, the rituals were institutionalized during the transitional period from the Shang to the Zhou dynasty (ca. 11th-century BC). Interesting and valuable descriptions of these processes can be found in several Chinese classics; however, the most important source for the research in these issues is doubtless the *Book of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記), which gives the following historical account of these procedures:

The Duke of Zhou took the seat of the son of Heaven, and governed the state ... He instituted ceremonies and established music; he standardized weights and measures, which led to a great submission throughout the kingdom.

周公踐天子之位以治天下；六年，朝諸侯於明堂，制禮作樂，頒度量，而天下大服。

Liji s.d., Ming Tang Wei: 2

Li Zehou repeatedly emphasizes that these developments were of epoch-making significance in Chinese history. He regrets that this significance has been forgotten due to the widespread neglecting of this fact in the historical analyses carried out by the Chinese academia:

Many studies over the past three decades, however, have focused solely upon general social formation, ignoring the important historical phenomenon of the establishment of ritual institutions. The real reason that Confucius and his followers so extolled the Duke of Zhou, and that later generations would even regard the Duke of Zhou as Confucius's equal, is precisely his systematization of the rites and music that Confucius so staunchly upheld.

LI, ZEHOU 2010, 11

Hence, Li highlights the fact that in the pre-Qin Confucianism, ritual became an important source of establishing moral psychology and spirituality. This fact is clearly reflected in numerous classical works of this dominant stream of thought. Throughout the *Analects*, Confucius stresses the importance of learning and practicing the rituals that contain rationalized social and moral regulations for the purpose of cultivating the gentleman (*junzi* 君子) who symbolizes the ideal character of self-realization (Jia Jinhua 2018, 163). They contain numerous descriptions of the crucial role of such institutionalization of rites in the shaping of moral psychology:

If (people) are led by virtue, and obtain universality through the rites, they will have a sense of shame and establish their moral character.

道之以德，齊之以禮，有恥且格。

Lun yu s.d., Wei zheng: 3

Such a universalization of moral psychology was achieved through the process of internalization of external behavioral regulations expressed and reinforced through rituality.

In essence, rituals were primarily guidelines reflecting and mirroring authoritative sets of requirements, rules and restrictions, which are imposed on the individual's social behavior. The social order and stability of the communities are preserved and protected through these individual constraints. Rituals were respected and followed for they provided an axiological matrix of symbols that helped individuals to fulfill the demands and obligations pertaining to their

particular social positions and functions. Such patterns of social obligations were then extended into human inwardness and mirrored in people's psychology—in their emotions, imaginations, ideas, language, thought and understanding. In this context, Huang Yong points out that ritual here “refers to one's internal wellbeing and not material condition” (Huang 2018, 223). In Huang's view, this is clearly visible from the famous saying by Confucius in which he emphasizes:

Without understanding the ritual, one cannot establish [one's moral character].

不知禮，無以立也。

Lunyu s.d., Yao Yue: 3

Ritual regulations have hence significantly helped individuals to enhance self-restriction and to control of their intentions and inclinations. These processes were also described in the *Book of Rites*:

People have (feelings of) love and hate, likeness and anger, sadness and joy. They are all products of the six vital potentials. Hence, we have to model ourselves carefully according to the suitable category in order to control the six intentions.

民有好惡喜怒哀樂，生于六氣，是故審則宜類，以制六志。

Chunqiu Zuo zhuan s.d., Zhao gong ershi wu nian: 2

Hence, controlling natural instincts and feelings was an important function of traditional Chinese ritual systems. Rituals guided human emotions, and ensured they remain moderate and did not lead to excesses. Li Zehou mentions that these issues had been elaborated in great detail by the early representatives of the Modern Confucianism such as Liang Shuming 梁漱溟 and Feng Youlan. The latter argued that in China, with its emphasis on spiritual transcendence, rituals did not belong to religion but rather to sensual human existence (Feng Youlan 1984, 139). He also repeatedly pointed out that the emphasis on the importance of controlling emotion in order to establish a moral character, which is based upon humaneness, can already be found in the Confucian *Analects*:

I think that regarding the questions about “humaneness,” the most important passage can be found in the chapter entitled “Yan Yuan asks about

humaneness.” It reads: “Yan Yuan asked about the humaneness, and the master replied: ‘Humaneness means to control oneself and to repeatedly perform the rituals. If one can do this at least for a day, the whole world can return to humaneness.’ ‘Is the practice of humaneness grounded in one’s own self, or in other people?’ Yan Yuan asked: ‘Please, tell me your view on this’ and the master answered: ‘Look not at what is contrary to humaneness; listen not to what is contrary to humaneness; speak not what is contrary to humaneness; make no movement which is contrary to propriety.’” Yan Yuan was the disciple with whom Confucius was most satisfied ... Hence, when he asked about humaneness, his reply was naturally different from his reply to other disciples. The answer he gave to Yan Yuan was over twenty five characters long. The first sentence of this reply was “Humaneness means to control oneself and to repeatedly perform the rituals.” This sentence clearly explains the crucial meaning of humaneness.

在這些講“仁”的話中，我認為“顏淵問仁”一章，最為重要。這一章說：“顏淵問仁，子曰：‘克己復禮為仁。一日克己復禮，天下歸仁焉。為仁由己，而由人乎哉？’顏淵曰：‘肅周其目’。子曰：‘非禮勿視，非禮勿聽，非禮勿言，非禮勿動’”。顏淵是孔子最得意的學生 ... 在他問“仁”的時候，孔子給他的回答，自然要比別的學生的回答不同。孔子果然給他了一個長達二十多個字的回答。其中頭一句就是“克己復禮為仁”。這一句明確地說明了“仁”的主要內容。

FENG YOULAN 1961, 63

Liang Shuming, on the other hand, accentuated:

What makes humans so far superior to animals is not their capacity to rational knowledge and wisdom, but rather the richness of their emotions. They arise from inner feelings and are then formed externally. This is the origin of rites and music, manners and culture, which establishes the essence of their contents. The reason why Confucians so strongly emphasize rites, music, and cultural ceremonies can probably be found in the fact that they are capable to guide and cultivate the emotions from the outside in. The emotions must be deep, truthful, sincere, and prudent. They must be ordered and modest. Joy and anger, sadness and happiness must not depart from a harmonious mean. Only on such grounds human life can achieve continuity and natural stability.

人類遠高於動物者，不徒在其長於理智，更在其富於情感。情感動於衷而形著於外，斯則禮樂儀文之所從出而為其內容本質者。儒家極重禮樂儀文，蓋謂其能從外而外以誘發 涵養乎情感也。必情感敦厚深醇，有發抒，有節蓄，喜怒哀樂不失中和，而後人生意味 綿永乃自然穩定。

LIANG SHUMING 1986, 441

Li highlights that in spite of the importance of such shaping of human psychology, we must not forget that the rites were primarily providing norms that order and regulate people from outside:

Actually, their relationship with the individual's nature as a flesh-and-blood human being is often one of confrontation, since the molding and influence that the rites exert on the human heart are externally imposed. They constitute a sort of compulsory regulation and systematization not necessarily directly linked to people's natural sensuous experience or to the expression of their desires.

LI, ZEHOU 2010, 16

These external regulations are then integrated into human psychological structures. Moral principles are produced and rationalized from the basis of human emotion and experience and in turn standardize and nurture morality. Thus, the rational, ethical principles are founded on a psychological basis, and morality and psychology, reason and emotion, are integrated to shape ideal humanity and moral character (Jia Jinhua 2018, 175).

In the process of extending the norms of conduct into the human inwardness, music has played an important role. It complemented and supplemented the rites by its direct appeal to human heart-mind and people's emotions. In this framework, it coordinated and synchronized collective feelings in order to achieve interpersonal harmony.

Ancient Confucian scholars have often described these processes, in which the ordering of society, as well as the structure of individual human inwardness were accomplished through rituality as a part of the humanization of nature. In numerous other classical works of other early Chinese intellectual traditions, this process was also evidenced in historical documentations, which provided first theoretical reflections of the specifically Chinese humanization of inner nature, but also included first written regularizations, systematizations and categorizations of all objects.²⁹

29 Li states that these theoretical systematizations "included the realms of experience and observation, such as astronomy, geography, the calendar, weather, the body, life and

These groundworks were elaborated upon and developed in a coherent philosophical system by the Neo-Confucian thinkers of the Song and Ming dynasties. In the course of such developments, the teachings derived from rituals have been subsumed under the term “ritual doctrines” (*li jiao* 禮教), which evidences their status as religious morality (Li Zehou 2016b, 35). These doctrines were centered on the aforementioned elementary virtue of traditional Chinese morality, namely the virtue of family reverence (*xiao* 孝). As we have seen, this notion expresses the crucial method for preserving, condensing, and evolving social rules that urge the individuals to follow their moral duties. It enhances the role of the family as a primal unit, which was clearly the product of an agricultural society. Through ritual ceremonies, family reverence was gradually institutionalized and integrated into the psychology of the Chinese people, who regarded it as “the rule of the heaven, and the duty of humans” (*tianzhi jing, dizhi yi* 天之經, 地之義). Gradually, it was understood as a part of transcendental “Cosmic structure or a patterned principle of Heaven” (*tian li* 天理), or of “inner (or inborn) knowledge” (*liangzhi* 良知), i.e., as a manifestation of the categorical imperative, which transcends the limitations of the human world. Hence, people who failed to act in accordance with the values of family reverence not only violated the principles of human relationships, but also those inherent in natural patterns and heavenly ways. Already in the Han dynasty text *Xiao Jing* 孝經 (*Classic of Family Reverence*) this virtue was considered a heavenly rule and earthly duty, and the various stories contained in this text elaborate on the notion of family reverence as a religious morality (ibid.). Such interpretations of moral principles have thus focused upon the relation between human beings and the heavens and in this view, virtues such as family reverence obtained a sacred value as universal standards of human conduct, that were even meant to guide the court politics.

However, family reverence is by no means the only moral imperative in Chinese thought. As already mentioned, Song Neo-Confucianism established the notions of the patterned principle of Heaven and the inborn knowledge as innate natural features of humans that authenticate rules for interpersonal relationships.

All these were instances where the empirical contents of social moralities filled in the transcendental formation of religious morality. These instances were perceived as sacred, universal, and necessary categorical imperatives. When integrated into human psychology and human action, these moral imperatives broadened the individual psychological landscape from the

death, hierarchy, dress, and also encompassed things beyond the reach of observation and experience as well as society, politics, and the ideals and realities of individual existence” (Li, Zehou 2010, 9).

narrow bounds of experience to a type of command that is independent of external constraints. This has simultaneously implied that the individual's considerations could surpass material desires and personal advantages. Because of such a mindset, people could act in accordance with the ethical and moral state of free will.

In this way, the contents of the empirical social morality are, according to Li Zehou, always expressed through the structure of transcendental religious moralities.

However, given that shamanistic (and later Confucian) traditions lack a personal God who could directly disseminate moral orders, Chinese religious morality contained spiritual notions of the "Way of Heaven" (*tian dao* 天道) and the "Heavenly intention or will" (*tian yi* 天意). But these concepts were often tightly connected with the "Way of Humans" (*ren dao* 人道) and the "Human intention or will" (*ren yi* 人意). From this we can see that there is a much higher degree of penetrability between the heavens and humans in Chinese thought than its Western counterpart, especially regarding the premodern and modern Western philosophy (*ibid.*). In the Chinese intellectual history, the "Way of Heaven" is amalgamated with the "Way of Humans."

The foundations of traditional Chinese beliefs and moral norms were thus formed through a tight connection to heaven or nature (*tian* 天). Confucian scholars have been applying this method for thousands of years in order to find the best way to live contently, in harmony with other members of society, and to obtain spiritual peace. Due to this long tradition, it is difficult for Chinese people, particularly intellectuals, to truly believe in religions with transcendent deities. It is difficult for them to explicitly affirm or deny their existence. Confucius has expressed such an attitude with his famous saying,

To give one's self sincerely to the duties of men, and, while respecting spiritual beings, to keep a distance from them, can be called wisdom.

務民之義，敬鬼神而遠之，可謂知矣。

Lunyu s.d., Yong Ye: 22

In this context, Li Zehou comments on Emile Durkheim, who claims that the split between the secular and sacred is the mark of religious thinking (Li Zehou 2016b, 37). Furthermore, he points out that Max Weber and Clifford Geertz also believe that religious states and experiences are very uncommon or even abnormal,³⁰ and entirely different from the more average human condition.

30 Here, Li Zehou uses the term *biantai* 變態, which is usually translated as abnormal, deviant, or even perverse.

From such works, we can conclude that the relation, range, and authority of the two kinds of morality can vary depending on cultural differences. In China anthropomorphic God was never truly established, and so the Chinese culture is determined by a unification and mutual pervasion of the two kinds of morality. The Confucian ritual doctrine emphasizes that the Way of Heaven can be found in daily relationships. In principle, social and religious elements are included in all parts of human life. In Chinese culture, religion, politics and ethics are fused together and form a unity.³¹ In this way, social institutions direct spiritual beliefs, the government and morality. In such a unified ideational system, each individual concentrates on problems and affairs of the concrete, tangible world in which they live, and on their everyday life experiences, feelings and actions.

This kind of religious psychology profoundly differs from the exclusive and monopolistic nature of monotheist religions such as Christianity or Islam. Therefore, it is quite understandable that in China, even followers of religious Daoism and Buddhism also stick to the Confucian values of humaneness, moral duties, loyalty, sincerity, and family reverence, which lie at the center of Confucian religious morality. This morality is grounded upon a transcendental understanding of “valuing one’s own moral uplifting” (*du shan qi shen* 独善其身), which is itself Confucian (*ibid.*). Thus, the institutions, rituals, and doctrines established by religious Daoism and Buddhism are not entirely detached from Confucian moral laws. On the contrary, they are regularly in communication with, and altered by, traditional Confucianism. Throughout history most Chinese people have been followers of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, and can pay their respect to symbols of all three religions at the same temple.³² This means that people’s thoughts, language, actions, and feelings cannot leave the space between heaven and earth (*ibid.*, 38). In such a worldview, subjective human needs prescribe that human affairs sometimes become endowed with sacred meaning. Forming ethics and morality in this way implies that the individual cannot resist, argue, or defend against accepting, submitting to, and implementing them. In such a system, ethics and morality become the individual’s own self-conscious understanding of the meaning of life, value and his or her ultimate concerns.

31 宗教, 政治, 倫理三合一 (Li Zehou 2016b, 37).

32 Li points out that this might also be the reason why Chinese intellectuals as well as common people could easily accept Marxism. They invest their belief, emotions, and rationality into the unification of religion, politics, and ethics, as a way of viewing of the cosmos as well as concrete human life.

4 The Capacity of Humanness and the Relation between Right and Good

The formation of transcendental structures in the human mind is closely linked to morality, which in Li's view consist of internal norms. This type of norms differs essentially from the external norms of ethics. In this sense, morality is a mental configuration, which is inherent to the individual mind and which is influencing people's attitude and their actions.

In Li's view, Kant's philosophy is one of *a priori* psychology, because it presupposes that human beings are human due to their psychological structures.³³ In principle, Li agrees with Kant in this respect, but aims to highlight that these structures are by no means entirely *a priori* (in the sense of a fix and unchangeable inborn formation), but are rather defined by dynamic, social and historical factors. Hence, he denotes these structures with a broader, more universal and semantically less determined term "capacity of humanness" (*renxing nengli* 人性能力). In this configuration, morality is a part of the so-called cultural-psychological formation (*wenhua xinli jiegou* 文化心理結構).

Li explains the reason for such a reconceptualization through a contrastive analysis of his theory and Kant's transcendental philosophy. He states that Kant's idea of practical reason is what everyone uses without even realizing it (Li Zehou 2016b, 89). His universal law comes from the self and is tightly linked to our inherent good will. In this view, we only have to intentionally follow the universal law to be anti-utilitarian, look calmly on life and death, surpass the mechanism of cause and effect, and transcend the realm of time and space. It is precisely because of these inner mental facilities that we are human beings. For Li, morality is therefore the substantive root of human existence (*benti cunzai* 本體存在). While Kant sees morality as being rooted in his notion of *a priori* practical reason, in Li's system it is grounded in the above-mentioned capacity of human nature (*ren xing nengli*), which is conditioned by the condensation of reason (*lixing ningju* 理性凝聚). In contrast to Kant's view, Li's notion of reason is not *a priori*, but arises and evolves within the dynamic and changeable course of history.

Hence, in this respect, the difference between Kant and Li is that the former understands this type of capacity as the *a priori* reason, which is by no means connected with any kind of experience. Li, on the other hand, argues—as we have seen in the previous sections—that human reason certainly does

33 Kant actually does not speak of human beings only: he never limits the property of practical reason and good will to human beings, but extends it to "all rational beings" (see Kant 2001, 5).

come from experience; through the long history of humankind, it has slowly accumulated, condensed and sedimented in the formations of human mind. Just like the internal emotions, the psychological structures of thought are also products that come about through culture. Even though they seem to be *a priori* from the viewpoint of the individual, they are being shaped through the sedimentation of experience in terms of humankind as a whole. This process is characterized by the absolute domination and control reason has over emotional actions and desires. Because of these characteristics, Li names this process as “the condensation of reason.” In its early stages, which can be observed in the evolution of primeval humans or small children, it develops through external pressures and learning. In such a model of advancement, certain ethical standards and requests need to be followed, and then gradually there is internal moral consciousness, concepts, and emotions.

In terms of the experience of a particular place and time, this capacity of human nature is transcendental. Because of its objective and universal nature, there is no need to be concerned with any empirical environments, utilitarian desires, or fear about life and death when establishing a sense of spiritual belonging. This kind of development cannot be led astray by any empirical conditions that determine the life of particular individuals. This human capacity, which is reflected in psychological structures, forms an extremely important and unique value for the sustainable existence and continuous development of human beings, who are thus able to exceed time and space as well as cause and effect.

In the Chinese tradition, this process of moral advancement was developed through self-cultivation, a method that in principle could lead individuals to reach high levels of moral accomplishment. This endeavor has been expressed by the principle of “establishing virtue at the highest level” (*tai shang li de* 太上立德) (Li Zehou 2016b, 89). Here, Li sees virtue (*de* 德) as a dynamic human potential that is capable of transcending the limitations of individual life and is higher than any external achievements (*li gong* 立功) or established teachings (*li yan* 立言). In his view, this potential also belongs to the capacity of humanness. It is sublime and extremely important because it forms a moral spirit that continuously establishes the actual substance (or the root) of what makes humans human. In this sense, the capacity of humanness is comparable to Kant’s categorical imperative. In this regard, Li Zehou exposes that it is precisely because Kant reveals this type of substance-characteristic in moral human practice that his moral philosophy is incomparable to any type of consequentialist “greatest happiness for the greatest number” ethics. Its greatness and its sublime nature are instead comparable to the beauty of heaven and earth (Li Zehou 2016b, 89). However, as we have seen above, Li understands

the moral characteristics of Kant's categorical imperative as a kind of human capacity, which represents a part of mental forms. In his view, it should not be confused with external ethical norms and social orders, because such understandings separate the capacity of humanness from reality and leads to a state in which it can be associated with the weaknesses of formal justice:

Precisely because people, including Kant himself, did not see that which he named "categorical imperative" as a kind of capacity of humanness in a sense of a mental formation, but have instead entangled it with external ethical norms, social orders, discussing both aspects together as if they were a unity, this model has led to numerous weaknesses of "formalism," which is separated from concrete reality.

正因為包括康德本人在內，都沒有把康德稱之為“絕對律令”的道德特徵看作人性能力或心理形式，而把它與外在的倫理規範，社會秩序糾纏一起，混為一談，便出現了許多脫離實際的所謂“形式主義”的弱點。

LI ZEHOU 2016b, 89

Li Zehou believes that it is important to see that ethics, as an order of external norms, is a product of history. Because of differences in time, place, and environment, ethics (in this external dimension) is always relative. Cultural anthropology already confirmed that, as a system of external norms, ethics changes according to different times and social orders. This fact has been highlighted by Hegel and Marx as well as various consequentialists and relativist theories. However, Li's theory differs from such approaches: while others focus on a relativist model of history, Li's historicism is absolute: natural human transformation, including both the external environment as well as internal mentality, is the product of the continuous accumulation and sedimentation of such objective "history."

As it is a form of sedimented reason, the capacity of humanness also belongs to such products of history. But even though it seems formal, it is actually a concrete structure of the relationship between emotions and reason in the human mind, which means that it is by no means empty. Although in the process of development it was defined by the continual historical evolution of unceasingly changing relative ethical norms and institutions, this "form" itself transcends their relativity and the kind of historicity that is limited to a discrete time and space. Even though ethical orders and their norms for human conduct change according to different times, environments, societies, culture, and religions, and are thus different and even contradictory or at odds with one another, the constraints of individuals in relation to their social groups form a common

psychological structure. In terms of establishing the trails and formations of the brain that distinguish human beings from animals, the various ethical orders and norms are similar. This dialectical interaction and mutual amalgamation of constancy and dynamics is the main methodological supposition, on the basis of which Li has established his theory of the capacity of humanness.

In this way, such a capacity obtains absolute value and meaning for the entire humankind. It can transcend any concrete individual or community and represent humankind as a whole. Because of this, the capacity of humanness also simultaneously obtains a kind of divine, religious, and absolute nature.

In the light of such actual historical dimensions, Kant's moral philosophy is obviously too formal and lacks operational potentials. While in his epistemology, Kant systematically focuses on experience and operation, the opposite is the case with regards to his moral philosophy, because in its framework Kant mainly elaborates on the existence of the rational substance that makes humans human. However, Li points out (2016b, 90) that those who criticize this formalism in Kant overlook his basic presumption regarding the primary properties of the existence of substance.

Besides, Li highlights the fact that the most prominent part of Kant's moral philosophy, namely the categorical imperative, is a human capacity, which was developed and elaborated upon during the European enlightenment. Although it is a mental formation, and as such, separated from the norms of external ethics, its contents are products of a specific stage in human history. Hence, it is difficult to separate the categorical imperative from the postulates on which it is grounded (such as the principle of human beings as ends) and from the external ethical requirements and demands of the time in which they came in existence. In this regard, Li emphasizes that Kant's philosophy (similar to those of Hobbes and Rousseau) was opening up a new path for modern people and modern society.

In this context, Li exposes that rational ideas such as "all humans are born equal" as well as freedom, human rights, independence, and so forth are all integral parts of modern social morality and its laws. He criticizes the interpretations that aim to completely divorce such products of particular spatial-temporal materialistic environments from actual life practices, and view them as eternal absolute values that determine and define the significance of human life.

On the other hand, he praises the discourses of the European enlightenment because they managed to depart from the traditional, theologically defined Christian moral theory, even though they were simultaneously still grounded on similar understandings of transcending the empirical realm. In such a system, God is an unknowable noumenon, but people can still obtain

universal (scientific) knowledge because they possess *a priori* reason. In this respect, Li admires Kant's philosophy because it proves that human understanding does not need to rely on God. It presents on a high theoretical level an unprecedented praise of humanity, announcing a new freedom and dignity of the human subject: in and by his philosophy, people were liberated from the medieval political and ideological yokes of God's authoritative rule.

In Li's system, the capacity of humanness can be expressed in a way that is comparable to Kant's free will. People are free to choose between good and evil and no person can make an excuse for shouldering the responsibility of their own conduct or attempt to blame for it the external conditions, the ideas of benefit and harm, or cause and effect (Li Zehou 2016b, 90). However, there is an important difference between this capacity and the rationalist conceptualizations of the free will, which is connected to the problem of sensibilities and rationality. In Li's view, different emotions enter into the various capacities of humanness; they influence the process of establishing particular understandings of norms. Feelings of reverence, respect, pride, love as well as hate, shame, and distress are hence associated with moral action. Therefore, humanness is an extremely complex entity, which can by no means be reduced to a simple capacity of reason. For Li, humanness is grounded in the emotion-based substance. It is precisely through such an interrelation of reason and emotion that the free will as a product of the condensation of reason and the humanization of the inner nature can achieve the possibility of transcending natural mechanisms of cause and effect.

In such an outline, the concepts of good and evil are closely connected to the individual's feelings of pleasure and sorrow. As such, they are shaped as part of institutionalized norms, ideological, and conceptual systems in concrete social community during particular periods of history. Since they belong to human psychological structures, they become the concrete content of the capacity of humanness and play an important role in the employment of rational imperatives of the "free will." Simultaneously, such concepts are also infiltrated into human emotions and profoundly influence them.

Although the concepts of good and evil belong to the private religious morality and are hence relative, they have to be in accord with the principles of social morality prevailing at a certain stage of human development. In this respect, Li points to the example of suicide bombers who employ rational imperatives in their religious war. Even though at first glimpse, they seemingly demonstrate a respectable function of the capacity of humanness, their conception of good and evil is utterly wrong. Hence, they violate the elementary principles of modern social morality, and their actions bring about strong universal negative emotions, obscuring thereby the elementary respect-worthy

capacity of humanness. Actual, widespread, and historically influential recognition can only be obtained for those human actions in which the capacity of humanness exhibits itself through the affirmation of such human emotions that are in concord with appropriate conceptions of good and evil. Hence, we can only talk about the connection and relationships of emotions and the conceptions of good and evil in their mutual penetration in the capacity of humanness through the analysis of the concrete relation between religious and social morality in a certain concrete time and space. For Li, this also demonstrates that not all negative emotions are necessarily harmful or wrong and not all affirming emotions are right or beneficial. Their actual worth can only be determined with regard to concrete circumstances in which they arise, for without considering these concrete empirical factors, they remain limited to the level of formal psychological states and cannot become a part of concrete judgments and social values.

This question is also connected to the opposition between the notions of right and good. In Li's view, contemporary Western ethics is bifurcated, as it considers human rights and justice as the key subject of political ethics and goodness as the main topic of religious ethics. In his elaborations on this issue, Li emphasizes that right and wrong are different from good and evil, highlighting that the analysis of their mutual difference should not follow the latter conceptual pair in determining the morality of the former.

Right and wrong is clearly different from good and evil. Irrespective whether in form of the Confucian theory of the goodness of humanness or of the Christian theory of the evil human nature, the latter cannot be used for constituting, constructing or affecting the legal order or moral adjudications of the former.

明確對錯與善惡有別，不應該從後者，不管是儒家的性善論，或基督教的性惡論來建立，構造或干擾前者法律制定和道德裁決。

LI ZEHOU 2016b, 93

On the other hand, social moralities should not interfere with religious problems such as defining the value and meaning of human life or explaining the goodness or evil of human nature. In such a case, social morality would necessarily assume the moral values of certain religious moralities or doctrines as its ideological basis. A vital function of social moralities is to guarantee that no individual violates the fundamental requirements of life, which include the freedom to choose and follow private beliefs in any values or doctrines. In Li's view, this is also the most basic right of individuals in modern societies, which

should be marked by the priority of the right over the good. In concrete societies, however, these two aspects of moral life cannot be entirely separated, because the moral values always influence the prevailing notions of right and wrong. Hence, in spite of the primary and normative position of social morality, private religious moralities should still preserve a regulative and properly constitutive function in moral judgements and conduct.

Religious morality must not constitute social morality. In such a case, they would lead to coercion and the good would rule over the right. But religious morality includes emotions and ideals in which people can satisfy their ultimate concerns. Hence, it should still preserve a guiding and regulative function.

宗教性道德不是去建立社會性道德，如果是建立，那就是強制了，那就變成善優先於權利了。而宗教性道德有情感、理想的寄託，牽涉終極關懷，所以可以是范導。

LI ZEHOU AND YANG GUORONG 2014, 124

The relationship between right and wrong on the one hand and good and evil on the other is based upon the priority of the former conceptual pair but is at the same time regulated and properly guided by the concepts belonging to the latter. Since Li Zehou strongly supports the division of church and state, it is even more important that this regulation is carried out in an “appropriate” (*shidang* 適當) way. This appropriateness can be achieved through the “art of politics” by grasping in each situation the fitting criterion provided by the dynamic proper measure (*du* 度).

Since in the present era, modern social morality is determined by the conditions of the contemporary stage of technological development, the dominant conceptualizations of right and wrong still have to follow the fundamental values of enlightenment, which manifest themselves in the protection of human rights and the postulate of human beings as ends. For Li, this is another reason for the absolute necessity of establishing the priority of right over good; in the opposite case, human beings could namely never obtain the position of being the ultimate value. If the good would prevail over the right, such value could necessarily only be ascribed to transcendent entities such as the immortal soul, God, collective or revolution (Li Zehou 2016b, 96).

Inspirations, Combinations and Critiques

Li's system of philosophical ethics is based upon—but not limited to—synthetic models consisting of various theoretical approaches. These approaches can be divided in two central categories. The first (and perhaps the most essential) is rooted in traditional Chinese ethical discourses and is firmly grounded on the foundation of Confucian paradigmatic framework. The second approach pertains to Western theories of philosophical ethics; in this scope, Li mainly elaborates on the philosophies of Kant, Hegel, Marx, Heidegger, and others. At times he compares or relates certain elements of his thought to the ideas and concepts derived from the Critical theory and existentialism, as well as from the theories of Bentham, Mill, Dewey, Rawls, Hayek, Sandel, and numerous other scholars who significantly contributed to the development of Western ethics. Many of their ideas have served Li as inspirations and important starting points for creating and developing his own philosophy as well as tools for establishing contrastive backgrounds for comparative analyses of their ethical thought on the one hand, and his own philosophy of ethics on the other.

In Li's outline, traditional Chinese, particularly Confucian ethics, represents the basic footing, which in his view has to be modernized and adapted to the requirements of the present era. In this process of modernizing classical Chinese thought, particular Western approaches are being modified, amalgamated, and combined with traditional Chinese as well as with Li's own innovative conceptualizations to form a new scheme of a universally valid modern ethics suited to the contemporary globalized societies. Both Chinese as well as Western ethical thought are critically examined, analyzed, and interpreted in order to provide a reasonable synthetic groundwork for such a new system.

1 Classical Confucianism and Traditional Chinese Ethics

In Li's view, Confucianism presents the basic underpinning of all traditional Chinese systems of philosophical ethics (Li Zehou 1992). After the Cultural Revolution, Li was among the first Chinese scholars who began to strive for a rehabilitation of Confucianism. Many of his writings on Chinese intellectual history, especially the ones published in the 1980s, played a significant role in revaluing Confucian tradition in modern times. In addition, traditional Chinese ethics also served as a powerful inspiration for his redefinition of human morality, which is

not based on pure voluntarism nor upon absolute determinism, but still remains in accord with historical materialism. In the *Foreword to the Reading the Analects Today* Li interprets the rise and the development of Confucianism through the method of deconstruction (*jiegou* 結構), which is then followed by reconstruction (*chongjian* 重建) (Li Zehou 1995, 27). In this heavily annotated translation of classical teachings into Modern Chinese, he directs our attention to the crucial traits of pre-Qin, Qin, and Han Confucianism. In this as well as in several other works, he examines which parts of these early teachings could be combined with the most important theories of Western ethical thought, to better confront contemporary questions, not just for China but also more broadly for humankind. He emphasizes that there is no single Confucian tradition but, rather, a broad scope of competing schools of thought, with the classical Confucian teachings found in the *Analects*, the *Mencius*, and the *Xunzi* depicted as integrally more valuable than the Neo-Confucian doctrines of the Song and Ming dynasties. In his view, the early classical teachings can be better adapted in contemporary societies. Through a combination of classical Confucianism and Western theories, Li aims to expose a new ethical discourse by providing an analogy with what Kant did in the early modernization of Europe (Nylan 2018, 137).

In such an agenda, Li differentiates (among other issues that will be illuminated below) between the surficial (*biao ceng* 表層) and the deep (*shen ceng* 深層) structure of Confucianism (Li Zehou 2010a, 7). While the former refers to its teachings in the sense of a rational, normative, ethical, and axiological system of thought, the latter pertains to the unconscious influence that arises from the cultural-psychological formation possessed by a broad population of Chinese people.

In his deconstruction, Li sees traditional Confucian thought as intrinsically connected not only with Daoist and Buddhist ideas, but also with Legalism, which was commonly seen as standing in direct opposition to Confucian thought. Hence, he not only speaks about the mutually complementary empowerment of Daoism and Confucianism (*Rudao hubu* 儒道互補), but he also lays stress on the reciprocal utilization of Confucianism and Legalism (*Rufa huyong* 儒法互用).

In this regard, he sharply criticizes the Neo-Confucian and Modern Confucian (*Xin ruxue* 新儒學) approaches, which deny the important role of Legalist factors in the shaping and in the historical evolvement of Confucianism as a main pillar of the Chinese intellectual and cultural tradition. In contrast to such approaches, which see the history of Confucianism as divided into three main phases, Li emphasizes that it has to be analyzed through the lens of four developmental stages.

In both Neo-Confucian and Modern Confucian views, the present stage is the last one. The present stage denotes the era of reconstruction and renovation of

Confucianism (and, in a broader sense, of the entire Chinese philosophical tradition), which began at the threshold of the twentieth century and is marked by attempts to mold traditional Chinese philosophy into a framework suitable for its survival and enhancement in contemporary times.

However, essential differences between the Neo-Confucian and Modern Confucian lines of thought on the one side, and Li Zehou's on the other, had already appeared in their particular understandings of the first phase, i.e., the phase of establishing the original Confucian teachings. While the interpretations of the former exclusively focus upon one particular line of Confucian thought that was further developed by Mencius, and thus denote Confucianism as the "Way of Confucius and Mencius" (*Kong Meng zhi dao* 孔孟之道), Li argues for a return to the pre-Song way of referring to Confucianism as the "Way of Duke Zhou and Confucius" (*Zhou Kong zhi dao* 周孔之道). In Li's view, the Confucian teachings were developed from the early ancient shamanistic historical tradition (*wushi chuantong* 巫史傳統), which was later modified, ordered, rationalized, and institutionalized by the Duke of Zhou (Zhou Gong 周公). But Confucius, who in this schema is seen as a follower of Duke Zhou, has elaborated upon different issues that were later further developed by his most prominent followers, including Mencius 孟子 and Xunzi 荀子, who both represent two major but different lines of original Confucian thought. The original teachings have encompassed elaborations on aspects of inner morality as well as facets pertaining to external ethical and political practice. Hence, the original Confucianism covered a dialectical interaction between both oppositional notions of the traditional idea of "inner sage and external ruler" (*neisheng waiwang* 內聖外王). It hence encompassed both the concept of empirical as well as the transcendental self.

However, even though Li often mentions that early Confucianism included both, the "inner sage" as well as the "external ruler," he is still not satisfied with the nature of their mutual relation, because in his view the former has always been seen as a primary and dominant element of the two. Therefore, this category, which mirrors the empirical and the transcendental self, has to be essentially modified in order to meet the demands of the modern era:

From the contemporary point of view, the "external ruler" can by no means be reduced to politics, for it implies the concrete vital existence and the material life of the entire humankind. It includes problems linked to technology, production, and economy. Neither can the "inner sage," be reduced to morality, because it pertains to the entire cultural-psychological formation and includes art, aesthetics, and so on. Therefore, the original Confucian and the Song-Ming Neo-Confucian model in which the "inner sage" always determines the "external ruler" must be eliminated and replaced by a new one.

“外王”，在今天看來，當然不僅是政治，而是整個人類的物質生活和現實生存，它首先由科技，生產，經濟方面的問題；“內聖”也不僅是道德，它包括整個文化心理結構，包括藝術，審美，等等。因之，原始儒學和宋明理學由“內聖”決定“外王”的格局便應打破，而另起爐灶。

LI ZEHOU 2008c, 332

Nevertheless, Li emphasizes the important differences between the original Confucianism and the Neo-Confucian philosophies: while the former still included representatives who concentrated on the external, political, and technological aspects of human life, the latter became somewhat obsessed with inner aspects of human morality. Gu Mingdong reveals (Gu 2018: 88) that Confucius's disciples Yan Hui 顏回, Zengzi 曾子, and Mencius focused upon the methods of evolvment, cultivation and perfection of the “inner sage,” whereas Zi Zhang 子張, Zi Gong 子貢, Zi Xia 子夏, and Xunzi elaborated on the external, political dimensions of the moral person and therefore laid stress on the development of the “external ruler.”¹ In Li's view, the exclusion of Xunzi and the denial of his significance has led the Neo-Confucian and Modern Confucian scholars to a one-sided (and hence, incorrect) interpretation of China's Confucian past and its ethical thought.² For Li, such a negation of important parts of China's ideational history is based upon prejudices (Li Zehou 2016, 10).

Because of this same reason, the Neo-Confucians and the Modern Confucians have never understood the historical importance of the first reform of original Confucianism, which took place during the Han dynasty, and which was focused upon the amalgamation of Confucian thought with Legalism in a new, unified state doctrine.³ They never regarded this significant

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- 1 Li agrees with Kang Youwei 康有為 that “the *Analects* of Confucius was written by Zeng Zi and his followers, who jettisoned the main spirit of Confucius. If the *Analects* had been composed by Zi Zhang, who was immensely interested in politics and government, it would have been entirely different” (Gu 2018, 88).
 - 2 As noted, Modern Confucians have generally followed a Neo-Confucian philosophy based upon Mencius's development rather than Xunzi's development of the original teachings. Xunzi was often viewed as something of a heretic who did not profess or elaborate upon the “proper” Confucianism in his own discourses. Xiong Shili, who belonged to the most important pioneers of the Modern Confucian intellectual movement, identifies what he considers the fundamental failing in Xunzi as his lack of the understanding of the original human goodness. In his view, with the exception of Xunzi, orthodox Confucianism from Mencius to Wang Yangming insists that there is original benevolence in human nature. Xiong concludes that Xunzi fails to reach the essence of Confucianism (Yu Jiyuan 2002, 131).
 - 3 Another reason why Li Zehou believed that the School of Legalism is related to Confucius lies in the fact that many prominent adherents of the Confucian school were teachers of later Legalist scholars. “In this connection, there are two lines of development. First, Zi Xia taught and trained a group of scholars who later became Legalists. Second, Xunzi, who was a

period of modifying original Confucianism to be the second period of developing Confucian philosophy. In this context, Li emphasizes that it is important to see that the Han dynasty philosophers, particularly Dong Zhongshu, successfully merged the external (i.e., ethical and political) dimensions of Confucian philosophy through Xunzi's elaborations not only with Legalism, but also with the cosmology of yin-yang and the five phases theory (*wu xing shuo* 五行說).

Dong Zhongshu and other Han dynasty scholars who have “established the yinyang theory as belonging to the constitutive pillars of Confucianism,”⁴ have absorbed and assimilated into their works numerous ideas, concepts, and outlines of Daoism, Legalism, and the yinyang scholars. They created a framework of interconnected mutual responsiveness and feedback between heaven or nature and human beings based upon the theory of yinyang and the five phases. This accomplishment was immensely important not only for the Han era but also in later periods, and their theoretical value is no lesser than the one that was produced by the Neo-Confucian philosophers of the Song and Ming periods.

“始推陰陽，為儒者宗”的董仲舒，以及其他漢代儒者，吸收消化了道法家、陰陽家許多思想、觀念和構架，所創立包羅萬有的天人感應的陰陽五行反饋圖式，在當時及後代都具有重大意義，其理論地位並不在宋明理學之下。

LI ZEHOU 2016, 9

In this respect, it is important to note that this second phase, which was marked by incorporations of ideas created by other schools of thought, was extending its influence and radiating into the following Wei Jin period, in which the so-called Neo-Daoist philosophers such as Wang Bi 王弼 and Guo Xiang 郭象 merged Confucianism with Daoism (Gu 2018, 87).

Hence, it is obvious that Li has studied and elaborated on Confucianism in a broader sense; in his synthetic reconstruction, he saw it as a system of thought that—besides the teachings of Confucius and his various direct followers—additionally comprises several different traditions, all belonging to the wider field of the “Teachings of the educated (*Ru xue* 儒學),” which is, by the way, the original meaning of the Chinese name for Confucian philosophy. Li has clearly

contemporary of Mencius, taught and trained a group of scholars that included Han Fei and Li Si, who later became the representative thinkers of Legalism. Moreover, Li Zehou suggests that Confucianism not only assimilated ideas from Legalism but also from Mohism, Daoism, the Yin-Yang school, and others” (Gu 2018, 88).

4 This phrase “始推陰陽，為儒者宗” is taken from the *Book of Han* (*Han shu* 漢書, see *Han shu* s.d., *Wu xing zhi shang*: 3).

shown that inner connections exist among all the traditional Chinese schools of thought (ibid., 88), emphasizing that it is not only feasible, but also necessary and significant to integrate the positive sources from the other important schools into a reconstructed Confucianism in such a widened sense. For him, the Confucian-based Chinese tradition is constituting the substance of historical ontology, which manifests itself in the Chinese cultural-psychological formation (Ishii 2018, 324).

The third stage of Confucianism began about 1200 AD, during the Song dynasty. In this phase, Confucianism accepted and assimilated numerous elements of Daoism, and also of the originally Indian Buddhism. During this time, Neo-Confucian schools and their main representative Zhu Xi created a very complex but coherent system of moral metaphysics that had a great impact on the whole of society for more than seven hundred years and that is still being developed further. During this third phase, the original Confucian teachings were interpreted anew and mainly explained through the lens of Mencian philosophy. The fourth stage of Confucianism appeared at the end of the nineteenth century; it was developed by the intellectual current of Modern Confucianism and is still ongoing in contemporary China.

In contrast to Li's approach, Modern Confucians omitted the second phase of development, merely acknowledging the Neo-Confucian reform as representing the second, and the modern transformation as the third phase.

Regarding the nature of Confucian teachings, Li believes that it is neither a religion nor a philosophy but is at the same time both a religion and a philosophy. He described it as a "semi-religion" as well as a "semi-philosophy" (Li Zehou 2008a, 4).

As a semi-religion, Confucianism does not discuss notions such as an anthropomorphic god, the revelation or miracles, but simultaneously, it is bestowed with religious qualities such that people can find in its ideas their emotional home, their spiritual consolation, and the meaning of life. In his view, Confucianism does not rule out religious beliefs. In the triadic union of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, such a belief subtly permeates other discourses and converts itself into a discourse that contains numerous vital and substantial elements of the other two religions (ibid.). It is through this symbiotic function that Confucianism has been able to perform the role of a secular religion (*ru jiao* 儒教) containing strong "ultimate concerns" (Gu 2018, 76). In Li's view, Confucianism

keenly tracks the meaning of life and seeks to experience and to understand the transcendent moral and ethical realm of Heaven and Earth. In real life, these qualities and functions of Confucianism can therefore serve people (individuals) as a safe home, in which they can secure their

social position, follow their personal fate, and find their spiritual devotion. It is therefore a “semi-religion” without an anthropomorphic god, and without any miracles or magic.

它折著地追求人生意義, 又對超道德, 倫理的“天地境界”的體認, 追求和啟悟. 從而在現實生活中, 儒學的這種品德和功能, 可以成為人們 (個體) 安身立命, 精省皈依的歸宿. 它是沒有人格神, 沒有魔法奇蹟的“半宗教”.

LI ZEHOU 2008a, 3

But, as we have seen, Li also regards Confucianism as a “semi-philosophy.” It cannot be denied that the original Confucian teachings did not rely on speculative or logical reasoning. Their central source, the *Analects*, illustrates its views through descriptions of everyday experiences, narratives, and anecdotes.⁵ This is also the main reason why Hegel critically refers to it as a collection of popular sayings lacking the conceptual precision and logical power of a philosophy. In his *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie* (1969, 142–143), Hegel described Confucius as an ancient “master” who had disseminated a collection of thoughts on morality without creating any real philosophy. This superficial and false understanding of ancient Chinese texts continues to hold sway in Western theory not only with respect to Confucius, but also in terms of Confucianism in general, and the whole of traditional Chinese thought (Rošker 2019, 101).

Li acknowledges that Confucius was not chiefly interested in investigating the metaphysical ordering of the universe and human life; instead, he was mainly preoccupied with reflections on human life in the concrete society. However, these reflections were based upon deep contemplations on rational terms “as he was engaged in investigating, demonstrating, and discovering reasons and rational categories by way of edifications and practical answers to his disciples’ questions” (Gu 2018, 77). Instead of creating far-reaching generalizations, Li quotes various passages from the *Analects* in order to demonstrate their philosophical bearings and dimensions. Although he admits that Confucius’s thought differs fundamentally from Plato’s ontology and from Hegel’s logical construction of philosophical systems, he points out that Confucian philosophy was based on different, equally profound foundations. For instance, an important difference between Western and Confucian approaches can be

5 This argument is often used to highlight the anti-philosophical nature of original Confucianism, and with it, the whole of traditional Chinese thought. However, in this context, we have to consider the fact that Confucius (551–479 BC) lived in the same period as the pre-Socratic philosophers in ancient Greece. As we all know, the preserved fragments of their works do not contain any coherent theories either, but the pre-Socratic scholars are nonetheless widely considered as the pioneers of classical Western philosophy.

found in the fact that Confucius's pragmatic reason is filled with emotional qualities of poetry (Li Zehou 2008a, 4).

Indeed, the Confucian system of teachings admonishes people to live not only morally and ethically but also poetically and artistically. In this sense, Confucius's way of reasoning easily reminds us of the way Heidegger in the latter half of his career conducted poetic investigations of philosophical issues.

GU 2018, 77

In Li's view of Confucianism, the notion of pragmatic reason is of utmost importance, for it essentially characterizes the general nature of these teachings. For him, the functioning of this kind of reason is grounded on strictly materialist foundations. Therefore Li denotes Confucianism not only as a "Chinese philosophy of pragmatic reason" but also as a "philosophy of eating" (*chifan zhexue* 吃飯哲學, see e.g., Li Zehou 1998, 142, 176–177).⁶ Gu Mingdong adds (2018, 77) that from this perspective, Confucianism could also be denoted as a "Chinese philosophy of life," for it cannot be reduced to any particular philosophical discipline or religious doctrine but rather represents a triadic unification of philosophy, religion, and life.

In Li's view, traditional Chinese, especially Confucian, ethics is extremely important in any attempt to modernize the philosophical and religious discourses of ancient, medieval, and premodern China. In this regard, he does not stand alone, for many other "major scholars and thinkers have noted the importance of modernizing Confucian ethics as the major strategy to transform Chinese culture" (*ibid.*). Therefore, it is understandable that Li regarded classical Chinese ethics as a theoretical and methodological basis of his own system.

As is well known, traditional Confucian ethics is relational and based on the identification of individuals with the multiplicity of their particular dynamic social roles.⁷ It evolved around the axiological notion of humaneness (*ren*), which is essentially a form of social empathy. It cannot be reduced to pure reason as it also involves emotions. In this sense, it is an important part of that basic paradigm of Chinese ideational tradition, which Li named "emotio-rational

6 Li's philosophy of eating looks for a feasible solution to secure the material dimension of human living: "Such concretization ostensibly relies on the ample supply of daily necessities that turns out to be the precondition for addressing other dimensions of human living" (Wang, Keping 2018, 238).

7 Because of this reason, Roger T. Ames denoted it as "role ethics" (see Ames 2011).

structure" (*qingli jieyou*). In its concrete reality, humaneness is rooted in the collective psychological formations or the "Great Self" (*da wo* 大我), which represents the unification of the individual with their community. This type of awareness was created through primitive sedimentation and shaped through shamanistic dances (Rošker 2019, 112).

As we have seen in previous sections, primeval culture has in Li's view gradually regulated human behavior through rituals and endowed it in this way with directions, patterns, and order. In addition to the shaping and nurturing the sense of the collective and of order in human action and thought, rituals also constituted the normalization of individual emotions and thoughts (*ibid.*, 115). In the human mind these patterns contain the sprouts of intellectual activity while simultaneously allowing for the expression of feelings. According to Li Zehou, these emotions and beliefs that were in China shaped by shamanistic rituality also represented the crucial foundations for the later Confucian moral virtues and values.

Traditional Confucian ethics was developed in a cultural milieu that Li defined as "culture of pleasure" (*legan wenhua* 樂感文化)⁸ as opposed to the "culture of sin" (*zuigan wenhua* 罪感文化), which prevailed in the Western world, or to the Japanese "culture of shame" (*chigan wenhua* 恥感文化) (Li Zehou 1999, 3). This traditional Chinese culture is rooted in a "one-world view" in contrast to the Western "two-worlds view" as expanded throughout the evolvement of Western philosophy. Its essential foundation is the emotion-based substance (*qing bentu* 情本體). Hence, this culture is not guided or organized by any kind of supreme rationality because its final purpose is the human being living in it. The experience of this feeling of pleasure is the highest experience:

Although it is individual, subjective, and sensual, it represents the bodily recognition or the ultimate experience of the "substantial root."

它雖仍是個體的、感性的，卻是對「本體」的體認或最高經驗。

LI ZEHOU 2016, 195

8 Li Zehou explains that this concept has a threefold semantic connotation. First, it refers to "a culture of worldly happiness," which is typical for Chinese tradition, for it concentrates on the material factuality of human life, which, in itself, is oriented towards worldly happiness and interpersonal harmony. Second, it denotes "a culture of optimism" because it is centered on opportunities for improving people's living environment from a humanistic and optimistic viewpoint. Third, it indicates "a culture of music and aesthetics," for it "helps facilitate the final accomplishment of human nature by virtue of musical appreciation and aesthetic feeling at its best" (Wang, Keping 2018, 235).

In the Confucian agenda, such a feeling of pleasure is an essential precondition for the shaping of humaneness, which occur precisely because of such amalgamation or unity of human material and spiritual life (Li Zehou 2011, 61). Hence, it becomes very clear that in the culture of pleasure, the ideal or the most important goal of human life is to live happily and to enjoy harmonious relations with other members of society through the unity of one's own body and mind. In such life, no higher transcendent realm is needed in order to guide human conduct. Hence, Chinese tradition is essentially different from those that grounded their ethical and social codes or the meaning of individual existence in the idea of transcendent supernatural beings such as a divine creator.

Pragmatic reason, which guides the development of such a traditional culture, is—*inter alia*—a specific form of “moral reasoning” but one that is grounded in actual historical experience. This culture can only be analyzed through the lens of the holistic one-world view, which does not distinguish the noumenon from phenomena, heaven from earth, or body from mind. But the Confucian one-world model is not only cognitive and epistemological, but also ethical implications. As already mentioned, it sharply contrasts with those ethical systems that derive their social codes and ethical norms from external supernatural beings. Instead, here, people's longing for existential meaning is limited to the realm of their concrete living environments. Such a worldview does not value self-abnegation or the feeling of failure because of the impossibility of reaching a more desirable realm or state:

In a contemporary context this means that Confucianism, especially in terms of the attention it pays to the ‘emotio-rational structure,’ can function as a corrective to curb certain shortcomings of modern thought associated with liberalism, formal justice, abstract reason, and notions of the atomic individual.

D'AMBROSIO, CARLEO AND LAMBERT 2016, 1059

Proceeding from this holistic framework, Li decidedly criticizes the Modern Confucian supposition that holds the elementary paradigm of the classical Chinese philosophy to be that of immanent transcendence, because he believes it is an artificial abstraction and hence incompatible with the basic structuring of the Confucian system, which in his view is based on what he calls the one-world view.⁹

However, the methodological tool of the one-world approach is not only limited to Li's philosophical ethics but is also intrinsically connected with

9 This critique will be introduced in detail in the next section of this book that deals with Li's relation to Neo-Confucianism and Modern Confucian philosophers.

other crucial methods and concepts pertaining to his general theoretical system. In general, Li's theory follows traditional approaches, in which there is no division between substance and phenomena or between the human beings and the transcendent world. In such a paradigm, the subject of cognition cannot be divided from the acting subject, and human consciousness cannot be detached from its bodily (or material) existence, including its social relationships. Because of this, Chinese epistemology is tightly connected to Chinese ethics, and in this respect, Li's theoretical system also follows the same structure.

In spite of this amalgamation, the practical aspects are more important within the unity of knowledge and action. Li emphasizes that traditional Chinese ethics was practical rather than theoretical, and more closely connected to empirical than to purely rational aspects of humaneness. In this aspect, it focused upon moral emotions than upon rational knowledge.

Hence, this unity of ethics and epistemology is structured in a dialectical and interactive manner, in which action clearly precedes and to a certain degree even determines knowledge.

Morality is not about "knowing" but rather about "practice"; although it includes knowledge (ideas or concepts), it is without knowledge, for it belongs to practice. Morality does not ask whether we know that we should act in a certain way. It neither asks whether we know how to act, and even less whether we are willing to act or not. It does not raise questions about knowing, being able, or being willing. It only asks whether we act or not act.

道德不是“知”而是“行”，道德中含有知識（即觀念），但並非知識，道德屬於行為本身。道德主要不是知不知應該去做或不做，也不是知不知如何去做或不做，更不是願不願意去做或不做的問題，它不是知不知、會不會、願不願的問題，而是“做不做”的問題。

LI ZEHOU 2017a, 58

In this context, individual moral emotions are certainly important, for they are interwoven with the essential ethical concepts of right and wrong; in Chinese ethics, as we have seen, these two aspects arise in a tight, interactive, and inseparable mutual connection:

The Chinese tradition has constructed humaneness upon the foundation of the "emotio-rational structure," in which the feelings of like and dislike are cultivated simultaneously with the concepts of right and wrong. They permeate each other and integrate to form a unity. This is a specific

characteristic of Chinese ethics. In other words, it is a kind of inherent Confucian mode of soaking reason with emotions in a “Reciprocal utilization of Confucianism and Legalism.”

中國傳統以塑 建“情理結構”為人性根本，強調“好惡”(情感)與“是非”(觀念)同時培育、相互滲透，合為一體。這就是中國倫理學的品格，它也可說是一種儒學內部的“儒法互用”，即以情潤理。

ibid.

In Confucian ethics, Heaven (or nature) is perceived as a great, boundless organism, of which all people are its parts. In its system, every human being is detached from but simultaneously integrated into this organism. Hence, the promotion of Confucian humanism does not mean that human beings have to separate themselves completely from the transcendent. As Liu Shu-hsien (1972, 48) proclaims, “Once they understand the creative sources within themselves, they can take part in the creative process of the universe and forget their troubles, which are linked only to their ‘small selves.’”¹⁰ A human being who has no concerns other than those of the small self is not a wholly developed person. Although people cannot achieve personal immortality through self-cultivation it can offer them something which is equally important: the method of living in accordance with their environments and the path to join into the transmuting and sustaining process of everything that exists. What classical Confucian teachings aimed to mediate to later generations was the awareness that this process of our integration into external reality will never come to an end, even if the cosmos ceases to exist in its present form.

According to Li Zehou, there is no metaphysical or supernatural origin of human cognition. The Confucian (one-world-dimensional) pragmatic reason can by no means be reduced to a law that is established by a “one-to-one correspondence” (Lynch 2016, 718) with the empirical world.¹¹ In this context, Li highlights that such a Confucian reason

10 In contrast to the aforementioned notion of the “great self,” the concept of the “small self” (*xiao wo* 小我) refers to the individual human being.

11 Since the concept of law is usually (and especially in this context) perceived as something that influences the objects from without, such a correspondence cannot be established in the framework of a holistic philosophy, which is based upon a network of inherent connections between subjective and objective realms, and upon the factual inseparability of substance and phenomena or the empirical and the transcendent worlds. While the principles that are being established in such a framework are transcendent in a processual,

accepts, honors, believes in, and even emphasizes its congruence with objective principles, rules or orders, which are in a certain sense independent from human thought or experience. These objective principles, rules or orders can be denoted as “the Way of Heaven” or the “decree of Heaven.”

它承認、尊重、相信甚至強調去符合一個客觀的原則、規則或秩序，此一原則、規則或秩序在某種意義上乃是獨立與人的思維和經驗的，這就是天道，或稱天命。

LI ZEHOU 2008, 247

This is also the reason why Li claims that Confucianism contains some “semi-religious” elements, although it is not rooted in the conception of an external supernatural deity or an anthropomorphic god. Li highlights that in essence the Confucian theoretical groundwork was agnostic,¹² which was philosophically relatively mature because the existence of supernatural beings is very hard to affirm or to falsify in terms of scientific demonstration (Rošker 2019, 143). For him, Confucian agnosticism is an evidence of the “clear rational spirit” inherent to its ethical system of humaneness (Li Zehou 1980, 89).

The rationalization of emotion, which took place in China during the process of converting natural religions into ethical systems of humaneness, was never grounded upon restrictions of desires; in this process, humans were instead presented with positive methods of regulating, ordering, and controlling the satisfaction of their needs and wishes. According to Li, Confucianism does not need an external god whose orders should be blindly followed in spite of the fact that they were derived from irrational authority. But in such a worldview, people could still possess the hope for self-fulfillment through humanism and their individual sense of mission without negating this world or humiliating themselves. Everything could be left to the regulative function and the balanced measure (*du* 度) of the pragmatic reason (*ibid.*). Li often emphasizes that in these

dynamic way, they are simultaneously still tightly linked to the empirical realm through their structural compatibility with the objects to which they refer.

- 12 In the Confucian *Analects*, there are numerous passages in which the existence of deities is questioned, though not explicitly denied (Rošker 2019, 142). Confucius unambiguously stressed that he does not talk about “strange powers and irrational deities” (子不語怪力亂神) (*Lunyu* s.d., Shu er: 490). He also emphasized that “we are not even capable of serving humans, so how could (or why should) we serve ghosts” (未能事人，焉能事鬼) (*ibid.*, Xian Jin: 569) and that “we even don’t understand life, so how could we know anything about death” (未知生，焉知死) (*ibid.*). In this context, the wisest thing one could do was to “keep a respectful distance from spirits and ghosts” (敬鬼神而遠之，可謂知矣) (*ibid.*, Yong Ye: 459).

processes people have the freedom to create, select, and regulate their own lives in and through their relations with other members of their own social group.

Besides, the Confucian pragmatic reason, which functions in accordance with emotions, encourages people to better adopt historical experiences and adjust them in a way such that they could best function in the interests of society. In this context, Li points to the development of science and technology in China. Even though the prevailing traditional streams of Chinese ideational history never developed to a significant extent logic reasoning, abstract cognition, or any other fundamentals of scientific thought, the Chinese nevertheless rapidly but competently and efficiently adopted all these modes of reasoning immediately after Western thought was introduced to China because they soon became aware of their pragmatic value. Therefore, Li believes (2008, 251–252) that Chinese tradition, Confucianism, and pragmatic reason cannot be seen as hindrances to modernization.

As we have seen, the notion of emotion-based substance lies in the center of Li's conception of the culture of pleasure. Since this emotion-pervaded substance (*benti* 本體) is not seen as a *noumenon*, it is not different or separated from the sphere of phenomena. Li understands it as the "(substantial) root," which manifests itself as the "ultimate reality" (*zui hou shizai* 最後實在) of everything concretely existing in the material world. Therefore, emotion, which is rooted in the deepest grounds of existence, also represents the very foundation of concrete human life (Li Zehou 2008, 54) and is something that belongs to the empirical world (Li Zehou and Liu Xuyuan 2011, 27).

According to Li, this fundamental significance of emotion was important because it helped Confucius lead people away from the worship of external deities into the network of interpersonal emotional bounding, grounded in kinship relations.

In his essay "A Reevaluation of Confucius," Li points out that Confucius plays a crucial role in developing the emotio-rational structure of the people in his times away from the worship of external deities to interhuman emotional bounding that was rooted in kinship relations (Li Zehou 1980, 85). Through rituality, emotions were melted and assimilated into the all-encompassing, integrated system that included sacral ethics as well as concrete practical activities.

In its interactive amalgamation with reason, the fundamentally significant emotion was centered upon the creation, cultivation, and development of humaneness (*ren*), which belongs to the most important and vital factors in the system of Confucian ethics. Li highlights that Confucius used humaneness to interpret and preserve rituality, through which external ethical regulations were internalized (Li Zehou 1985a, 16).

As we have seen, the Confucian (and to a great extent, the entire system of traditional Chinese) ethics was rooted in concrete interpersonal relationships.

Li denoted such a system “relationalism” (*guanxizhuyi* 關係主義). Therefore, some scholars believe it should be seen through the lens of the so-called role ethics (Ames 2011; Rosemont and Ames 2009), because Confucian relational ethics (or, in Li’s words, “relationalism”) does not fit well in any of the existing Western categories of ethical models that are based upon the notion of an isolated or fragmented individual.¹³

Li claims that the idea of the unity of reason and emotion—rather than the concept of pure reason—is the philosophical basis that enables us to understand the crucial differences between Chinese and Western ethics (Li Zehou 2014, 2). On this basis, he attempted (as we shall see in later sections), to compare and merge some basic conceptions of the Confucian ethics with certain elements of Kantian deontology. In his view, such a reinterpretation of Confucianism could provide valuable components for the establishment of a new form of public reason, suitable for contemporary globalized societies.

Following such an endeavor, Li aims to use Chinese philosophy to process not only Kant’s thought, but also the ideas of other prominent Western philosophers in order to create a modernized Chinese thought based on his regulatory standard of “(assuming) Western substance, and (applying) Chinese function” (*xiti zhongyong* 西體中用), which is an inversion of Zhang Zhidong’s famous motto “(Preserving) Chinese essence and (applying) Western functions” (中體西用).¹⁴ Li aims to illuminate the new system’s continuity with the traditional one through what he calls “transformative creation” (*zhuanhuaxingde chuangzao* 轉化性的創造). Li coined this phrase as a reconceptualization of Lin Yusheng’s proposal for a creative transformation of tradition, arguing that the original phrase implied that China’s tradition should be transformed in accordance with Western paradigms. Instead, he strives to create new forms and models in agreement with the specific conditions of both Chinese history and contemporary Chinese reality.

Among other issues, such an endeavor is linked to the necessity to transform certain traditional concepts and categories, or to replace them by similar modern notions (Li Zehou 2005, 1–2). In his *Anthropo-historical Ontology*, Li

13 The role ethics model is based upon the presumption that in the prevailing Western image of the individual, he or she enters into particular social relations as an independent, isolated self. In contrast to such understanding, the Confucian role-constituted person lives in a community defined by social roles. She does not play, but rather lives the roles that are prescribed to her through her particular position, because people cannot be abstracted from their relations with other fellow humans. This view is rooted in Roger Ames’s framework of process ontology, which lacks any substance that bears property or essence; every existence is hence necessarily dynamic and relational (Elstein 2015, 242). In such an understanding, the community exists before the individual because the latter is constituted through social relations and cannot exist without them.

14 For a more detailed introduction of this reversal, see Rošker 2019, 39ff.

explains, for instance, why it is necessary to replace the traditional Confucian concept of the ruler with a modernized notion of country. In his view, the word “country” is not limited to any state, government, political regime, or political system but rather refers to a sort of psychological identification with a vague and comprehensive historico-cultural commonwealth (Gu 2018, 84).

In such a renewed form, in Li’s view Confucianism could truly serve as a basis for a new global ethics. According to him, the Confucian system is capable of assuming this role not only because of its presumption that we are all bound together by our very humanity (*ibid.*, 90), but also because of its generally inclusive and assimilative nature. Li often exposes the significance of such a vital potential inherent in the classical Chinese Confucianism, “even in the face of mass defections by Western-trained intellectuals who tend to reject Confucian teachings as ‘outmoded’ and ‘anti-progressive’” (Nylan 2018, 139). Confucian culture is widely seen as authoritarian and hierarchical, oppressing individual freedom. In his work, especially in his aesthetic studies, Li shows that such an understanding is based on prejudices and establishes a novel account of freedom rooted in a valuable form of individuality with Confucian characteristics.

This freedom involves orienting desires and emotions toward shared communal objects and experiences, which allows for the coordination of desires (not merely private desire satisfaction) and the capacity to generate aesthetic goods such as beauty, delight, and a sense of ease.¹⁵ This freedom is something that has to be cultivated; it cannot be possessed only as a right and it emerges from a variety of cultivated psychological responses that are grounded in stable social structures and human relationships (Lambert 2018, 96). In Li’s view, the Confucian notion of freedom and individual personhood is different from the Kantian one that is rooted in the idea of a firm moral will but instead is based upon the culture of pleasure and the aesthetic sensibility possessed by human beings.

In contrast to a conceptualization of freedom evolving from the categorical imperative, which operates in the rational or cognitive realm, Confucian freedom is manifested in the human self that is marked by aesthetic sensibility. It is not only an intellectual aptitude, expressed through conscious volition, but also a form of cultivated aesthetic responses, tightly connected with practical skills and imagination. In such a view, aesthetic sensibility functions as the foundation for practical action in the social world. Li exemplifies this connection through the function assumed by music within the framework of Confucian rituality: the structure of musical harmony is congruent

15 Andrew Lambert (2018, 105) exposes that “In fact, it is Li’s work in aesthetics that furnishes his most interesting conception of freedom and individuality, one that is consistent with many of the features of the Confucian tradition that Li describes.”

with the structure of harmony in human relationships (Li, Zehou 2010, 20). The Confucian classics were grounded in the presumption that the structure of music was compatible with the structure of the cosmos (see Rošker 2012). Thus, the performance of “proper” music (*ya yue* 雅樂) could reunite men with the “regularity” of the cosmic order; in other words: the structure of music could incorporate human beings into the totality of everything that exists. Therefore, music was seen as an important element of the re-creation of the highest ideal of Confucian holism, namely the “unity of men and nature” (*tian ren heyi* 天人合一). Ritual as such was seen not just as an arbitrary form but as a formalized pattern that, properly executed, could be structurally connected with the cosmic order. Thus, in Confucian discourse, “proper” music played an important part as a well-ordered tool for the social integration of individuals, for whom the consideration of the “proper” structure that determined “proper” music was essential for a harmonious society.¹⁶

This presumption, which can be found in various Confucian classics, suggests that practices that intensively convey sensuous experiences (as for instance playing or listening to music) can powerfully influence human emotions and desires and can therefore “properly” guide actions and prevent conflicts. Here, freedom is not seen as a simple absence of limitations or as simple satisfaction of needs and desires. Instead, it is an ability that can only be developed through conscious self-cultivation. This insight is important because it shows that various characteristics of Confucian philosophy that initially appeared conservative and rigid—the demanding of and need for attention to personal attachments and roles—can be understood as constituents of a different, more meaningful freedom (Lambert 2018, 112). Such a freedom is an active, positive form of freedom, contrasting with accounts of negative freedom that

16 This view is, however, not only linked to a freedom of aesthetic sensibility, but also to judgments and restrictions; only “proper” music was allowed to assume the function of the formal standard for the molding, and rationalizing human emotions. The Daoist philosopher Ji Kang 嵇康 from the Wei Jin period, for instance, saw in the Confucian politics of dividing “proper” and “regular” music from “improper” and “licentious” one, an intolerable and essentially harmful measure that molds it into the narrowness of the ideological tool of the ruling morality (Ji Kang 1963, 225). Here, we can clearly see that the realm of aesthetics, which preconditioned the rising of human freedom, was strictly confined to the standards of moral appropriateness, which had to direct any form of personal cultivation. Hence, the Confucian notion of human freedom could only be achieved through a conscious process of subjecting oneself under the restrictions and limitations regulating the human action. The rigid nature of such requirements that had to be obeyed by every human being who aimed to liberate him or herself from the burdens of instinctual inclinations is certainly deontological and can be compared to Kant’s conceptualization of the free will.

focus solely on noninterference. In Li's view, the latter is "empty" because it fails to take into account the humanness of individual persons, which includes a commitment to social interaction and exchange. "Libertarian ideals of freedom as isolation or independence are thus opposed at the level of metaphysics and foundational accounts of the self" (ibid.).

In general, Li's reconceptualization of traditional Chinese, particularly Confucian ethics, can essentially be viewed as a transcultural one. It aims to assimilate Chinese thought with its Western counterparts while departing from both categories through his transformative creation (Wang, Keping 2018, 246), which enables Li not only to generate new theoretical and methodological elements, but also to achieve new and challenging insights into the very nature of moral philosophy. These innovative insights have led Li Zehou to establish his own system on the grounds of the traditional one-world paradigm, characterized by the synchronicity of human beings with the emotion-based universe and the energetic fusion of empirical with transcendental worlds. This dynamic holistic system is determined by the guidance of pragmatic reason and allows for the situationally appropriate grasping of the proper measure (*du*). Such a system is able to embrace the entire complexity of humaneness, for it can meet the demands of both human becoming and human accomplishment in interpersonal relations.

2 Neo-Confucian Philosophies and Modern New Confucianism

When dealing with the crucial virtue of humaneness (*ren*), Confucius always focused upon its role in the concrete circumstances of societies and in regard to concrete people. According to the *Analects*, it was never guided by an abstract categorical imperative belonging to transcendental reason (Li Zehou 2010, 67–68). In this regard, Confucianism was interpreted in a different way during the third phase of its evolvement. The Neo-Confucian philosophers from the Song and Ming dynasties, who were influenced by Buddhist thought, aimed to find such a guiding reason in the Confucian discourses through ontological explorations. They tried to establish the concept of such a transcendental reason through the notions of cosmic structure (*tianli* 天理) and innate knowledge (*liangzhi* 良知), respectively. They established the metaphysical system of the so-called philosophy of heart-mind and inner nature (*xinxing* 心性). While the first concept denoting this system (*xin* 心) is empirical, the second one (*xing* 性) is transcendental. Irrespective of these different aspects through which each is defined, they still represent one and the same entity (Li Zehou 2008c, 323). For the Neo-Confucians, inner nature (*xing*) was a moral imperative guiding proper interpersonal relationships while the

heart-mind (*xin*) was based in concrete experiences and in human emotions (Li Zehou 2010, 67).

Li finds major differences between original Confucianism and the Neo-Confucian discourses already existed in the works of the two crucial representatives of the Song School of the structural principle (*li xue* 理學), namely Zhu Xi 朱熹 and Cheng Yi 程頤 who interpreted the virtue of family reverence (*xiaoti* 孝悌) as the foundation of humaneness. Original Confucianism saw the relation between the two in the opposite way, for according to the *Analects* humaneness was founded upon family reverence.¹⁷ For Cheng and Zhu, the virtue of family reverence is based on love, which belongs to emotion (and hence, to the empirical sphere), while humaneness is a part of the transcendental inner nature and is thus guided by the all-encompassing structural pattern or principle called *li* 理, which surpasses the realm of changeable empirical situations and emotions. Even though Mencius, who represented the main source of Neo-Confucian reinterpretations, unambiguously claimed that “the reality of humaneness is to be found in the service to one’s closest persons (i.e., family members)” (仁之實，事親是也, Mengzi s.d., Li lou shang: 27), Cheng and Zhu interpreted this “reality” (*shi* 實) as a kind of substance (or noumenon),¹⁸ which allowed them to establish a transcendental principle comparable to Kant’s categorical imperative (Li Zehou 2010, 69). However, in the traditional Chinese one-world paradigm, such a principle was difficult to constitute:

In Kant’s philosophy, this transcendental imperative has no connection to the empirical world and thus, the noumenon can be separated from phenomena. But due to the long lasting shamanist tradition that prevailed in Chinese culture, such an idea of separation was difficult to establish in Cheng’s and Zhu’s thought. Even though their “structural pattern” belongs

17 While the *Analects* clearly states (*Lunyu* s.d., Xue er: 2) that “Family reverence represents the foundation of humaneness” (孝弟也者，其為仁之本與) Cheng and Zhu emphasized that “Regarding the inner nature, humaneness is the basis of family reverence” (論性，則仁為孝悌之本) (Zhu Xi s.d. Qiaoyan lingse xian yi ren zhang: 11).

18 See for instance “Human inner nature is actually the substance” (人之性本實, Zhu Xi s.d. Renyi lizhi deng mingyi: 43). Actually, this kind of “substance” was not seen as a purely monistic ground of existence, for it was often understood as a notion that is close to the connotation of “fullness” or the “filling,” for it stands in binary opposition with the notion of emptiness; see for instance: “While we, the Confucians, equate the inner nature with the substance, the Buddhists understand it as emptiness” (吾儒以性為實，釋氏以性為空, see *ibid.*, 39). If we here consider the fact that in the Buddhist philosophy, all phenomena were seen as illusory and hence, empty, the notion of *shi* 實 (as an opposition to the Buddhist emptiness *kong* 空) could actually be interpreted as an (ultimate) reality of phenomena.

to the “cosmic structure,” this “cosmic structure” is always merged with the empirical existence in the material, physical world.

在康德那裡，這作為先驗律令與經驗世界毫無干係，本體和現象界可以截然兩分。而在程、朱，由於中國久長的巫史傳統，很難產生經驗先驗，本體現象截然兩分的觀念。“理”雖然是“天理”，但這“天理”又總與作為自然物質的經驗生存混同在一起。

ibid., 69–70

Because of this reason, Li believes that their endeavor to launch a transcendent philosophy has essentially failed (ibid., 70). In their system, natural sensuality could never truly be divided from rational principles, but was rather still firmly infiltrated into them.

Li also highlights that Kant has strictly separated reason from recognition and substance from phenomena. His practical reason (ethical actions) is merely a “categorical imperative,” tightly linked to the concept of “duty.” It is completely detached from any kind of sensitivity that belonged to the phenomenal, empirical world. It has nothing to do with the law of causality or time and space. Such a view enabled Kant to establish and to preserve its transcendental ontological position.

But the Chinese pragmatic reason was completely different: it was never based upon a differentiation of substance and phenomena. On the contrary, it always sought to achieve the former through the latter. It belonged to the tangible world, but surpassed it at the same time. While Kant’s categorical imperative was a pure transcendental form, which was inexpressible and without origin, the Neo-Confucian “Decree of Heaven (*Tian ming*)” was a part of the inner nature (*xing*), which functioned in accordance with the all-encompassing structural pattern (*li*), permeating the concretely tangible as well as the transcendental realm. As such, inner nature was linked to the heart-mind; besides possessing a transcendental nature, it was thus also connected to sensitivity and belonged to the empirical world. Hence, in the Neo-Confucian discourses of the School of the structural principle (*Li xue* 理學), the world of natural sensitivity was never truly divided from the noumenal world of rational ethical norms. In such a framework, heaven (nature) and human beings were marked by both reason and emotion.

The same holds true for the later Neo-Confucian philosophy, which manifested itself in the “school of the heart-mind” (*Xin xue* 心學).

Even though the school of the heart-mind emphasizes that its “heart-mind” is not a heart-mind of perception or sensitivity, but rather a pure transcendent moral substance, they still describe, express, and define it

with phrases such as “continuous life,” “restlessness,” “compassion,” and so on. Isn't it clear that such notions pertain to sensitivity and perceptual experiences?

儘管心學強調“心”不是知覺的心，不是感性的心，而是純道德本體意義上的超越的心，但是它又總要用“生生不已”，“不安不忍”，“惻然”等等來描述它，表達它，規定它。而所謂“生生”，“不安不忍”，“惻然”等等，難道不正是具有情感和感知經驗在內嗎？

LI ZEHOU 2010, 71

In contrast to such discourses, the original Confucian philosophy was based upon principles of emotionality included in the psychology of sensitivity. Here, the category of humaneness (*ren*) was seen as something belonging to the inner nature (*xing*) and to the structural principles (*li*) that regulated all existence. On the other hand, however, it was defined by natural growth and development. All such categories, including the notion of heaven (*tian*) or heart-mind (*xin*) were parts of nature, but simultaneously they also surpassed it. They included rational and emotional elements. Hence, the Neo-Confucian endeavors to establish a dual metaphysic implied an inherent contradiction, for their search for a transcendental reason was rooted in the traditional Chinese holistic philosophy, in which the empirical sensitivity was inseparably linked to inner nature (*ji qing ji xing* 即情即性), and there were no divisions between body and mind (*xin bu li shen* 心不離身). In Li's view, this failure of the Neo-Confucian philosophy to establish a moral metaphysic of transcendental reason belonged to the most intriguing problems in the Chinese ideational history and should be thoroughly examined (Li Zehou 2010, 72). But irrespective of their philosophical worth, the Neo-Confucian “deviation” could never be integrated into the field of Li's historical anthropology. Neither can it be compared to Kant's transcendental philosophy, for the Neo-Confucian scholars never managed to liberate themselves from the paradigms postulated by the long-lasting shamanist tradition of all-embracing, holistic one-world view. Having said that, Li still emphasizes that the Neo-Confucian studies came closer to Kant's philosophy than any other school of traditional Chinese thought, because like Kant they also aimed to constitute a transcendental ethics.

All in all, Li thinks that as a philosophy, the Neo-Confucian stream of thought is valuable, although it was strongly influenced by Buddhist thought, which does not belong to the Chinese (and even less to a purely Confucian) tradition. On the other hand, he also emphasizes that many elements of this thought were harmful because of their conservatism, especially regarding the position of Chinese women, which began to worsen with the rise of Neo-Confucian social ideologies (Li Zehou and Liu Yuedi 2014, 200).

Another important point of Li's critique of the Neo- and Modern Confucian discourses was linked to their attitude toward the concept of feelings and emotionality. While Li, as we have seen, thoroughly highlights the significance of emotion as a basic ontological value of the original Confucian understanding of the universe, the Neo-Confucian scholars viewed emotion, which also included intentions, wishes, and desires, as something negative, something that had to be eliminated or fought against.¹⁹

On the other hand, most of the Neo-Confucian philosophers have followed the philosophical current that was established by Mencius, even though Li highlights the fact that Zhu Xi's line of thought also included and developed many elements of Xunzi's rational philosophy. In his view, Zhu Xi has "raised the Mencian flag while acting in accordance with the teachings of Xunzi" (*ju Meng qi, xing Xun xue* 舉孟旗、行荀學). Thus, Zhu Xi's "anti-emotional" line can also be seen as a result of such tendencies. In spite of this, Li Zehou values this line of thought higher than most of the later ideational developments of the Neo-Confucian philosophy (Li Zehou 2016c, 8).

As is well known, the Neo-Confucian philosophy was one of the chief sources for later Modern or New Confucian (*Xin rujia* 新儒家) interpretations of and elaborations on traditional Chinese thought. Hence, Li's critique of the central theoretical approaches developed by the Neo-Confucians was also reflected in his critique of the Modern Confucian discourses. He values the achievements of most of the representatives of the first generation, especially the philosophical contributions of Xiong Shili (1885–1968) and Feng Youlan (1895–1990), who was also his teacher at the Peking University.²⁰ In contrast to the latter, Xiong was a more genuine follower of the Neo-Confucian philosophies, for his work included Confucian as well as certain Buddhist elements. While Xiong's elaborations upon and interpretations of Western thought remained rather superficial, Feng's greatest contribution laid precisely in this field; as he was one of the first Chinese scholars trained in Western philosophy. Feng managed to

19 Zhu Xi, for instance, directly emphasized that people should "preserve the heavenly pattern and eliminate their desires" (存天理, 去人欲, Zhu Xi. s.d., *Xun men ren wu*: 45). Only in the beginning of the seventeenth century, and especially in the scope of the May 4th Movement (1919), emotion was rehabilitated, since human desires were also an important driving force of scientific progress. Emotion preserved its positive connotation until it was oppressed once again by the moral philosophies of Modern or New Confucians.

20 Li has also analyzed and interpreted the work of Liang Shuming (e.g., Li Zehou 2008c, 296–309), who also belonged to the first generation of the Modern Confucian stream of thought. However, for him, Liang was a theoretician of cultural studies rather than a philosopher. In the latter respect, he was well known for his epistemology and his contributions to the Chinese conceptualizations of intuition, rather than for his elaborations on ethics in a more narrow and precise sense.

create an innovative renovation of Confucian philosophy through the lens of a rather rigid logical framework derived from Western philosophical methodologies. In contrast to Feng's relatively analytical approach, Xiong applied a more traditionally Chinese, holistic methods of interpretation, at the same time criticizing Western as well as Buddhist philosophy for their strict separations between substance and phenomena, subject and object of comprehension, and all the other connotations derived from this basic dualistic model. He also assumed their basic framework of static logical paradigms (Li Zehou 2008c, 316). In this respect, Li regarded Xiong as a more suitable continuer of genuinely Confucian thought, although he also based his reconstruction of original Confucianism upon certain concepts of these two traditions (*ibid.*, 295). The main point of Li's critique on Xiong was merely that he focused too extensively upon the Mencian interpretation, which means that he excluded Xunzi and his more rational, logical, <?> and proto-scientific approaches. In this context, Li encouraged Xiong to exclusively concentrate upon the elaboration of human inwardness and moral psychology, or, to put it in more traditional terms, upon the "inner sage" (內聖 *nei sheng*), diminishing thereby the significance of politics, science and technology that were of central importance for the "external ruler" (外王 *wai wang*). In other words, he solely focused on the elaboration upon and the evolvement of the traditional Chinese transcendental subject instead of simultaneously developing the empirical one (*ibid.*, 293).

However, Li's critique of Modern Confucianism is mainly directed toward the philosophy of Xiong's most famous student, namely Mou Zongsan (1909–1995), who also belonged to the most well-known scholars of this intellectual movement. In Li's view, Mou was also the only significant philosopher of the second generation of Modern or New Confucianism (*xin ruxue*)²¹ (Li Zehou 2008c, 321). Mou was especially interesting because he also attempted to produce a synthesis of Confucian and Kantian ethics, although in this respect, his methodology and his basic theoretical approaches essentially differed from those applied by Li in his own theory.

21 The categorization into "generations" follows a long tradition in Confucian scholarship, which is ultimately rooted in classical Confucianism. According to the most widespread acknowledged classification (see Rošker 2016, 31), the three generations of Modern or New Confucians include the following scholars: **1st generation:** Feng Youlan 馮友蘭 (1895–1990), Xiong Shili 熊十力 (1885–1968), Zhang Junmai 張君勱 (1886–1969), Liang Shuming 梁漱溟 (1893–1988), and He Lin 賀麟 (1902–1992); **2nd generation:** Fang Dongmei 方東美 (1899–1977), Xu Fuguan 徐復觀 (1903–1982), Tang Junyi 唐君毅 (1909–1978), and Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 (1909–1995); **3rd generation:** Yu Ying-shih 余英時 (Yu Yingshi, 1930), Liu Shu-hsien 劉述先 (Liu Shuxian, 1934), Cheng Chung-ying 成中英 (Cheng Zhongying, 1935), and Tu Wei-ming 杜維明 (Du Weiming, 1940).

According to Li, Mou's method of integrating Chinese with Western philosophy was essentially problematic. He exposes that this contemporary Modern Confucian scholar has

proceeded from the Confucian positions but tried to incorporate into it certain foreign elements in order to endow it with a new guise. However, might it be even better to combine them when proceeded from the opposite view, and to apply the contents of the foreign, modern ideas as a driving force or an essence? In this way, it would be possible to transformative create a new dimension of our tradition.

站在儒學傳統的立場上吸收外來的東西以新面貌，是否可以反過來以外來的現代化的東西為動力和軀體，來轉化新的創造傳統以一新耳目呢？

LI ZEHOU 2008c, 332

This remark is especially important under consideration of Li's specific understanding of Chinese modernization. As is well known, he inverted Zhang Zhidong's famous slogan, which suggested that in the process of modernization China should "preserve Chinese essence and apply Western functions" (*Zhongti Xiyong* 中體西用). Li has namely proposed that it should rather "assume Western substance and apply Chinese functions" (*Xiti Zhongyong* 西體中用). Although numerous scholars misunderstood Li's new phrase and interpreted it as a proposal for a wholesome Westernization, Li often emphasizes that this is not the case:

The main flaw of the (slogan) "Chinese substance and Western applications" is to be found in the assumption that technology is application and not substance. But the exact opposite is true: technology is substance, because technology is connected with social existence as well as with productive forces and the modes of production.²²

中體西用論的最大的錯誤就在於認為科技是用而不是體，其實科技恰恰是體，因為科技理論是與社會存在，與生產力、生產方式聯繫在一起的。

LI ZEHOU 1996, 253

22 For a comprehensive description of this reversal of intellectual background and of the controversies that arose from it, see Rošker 2019, 172ff.

Hence, the correct interpretation of the new slogan hinges on the understanding of the concept *ti*, or substance, which the proponents of the original motto viewed as the “substance of tradition,” while Li instead saw it in Marxist terms as the material basis of society (Rošker 2019, 174). This interpretation of *ti* is in accordance with both original Marxism and original Confucianism. On the other hand, the “function” (or application) is of immense importance, because it determines the concrete circumstances of people’s lives.²³

Mou Zongsan, however, has widely assumed the central concepts of Western (especially Kant’s) philosophy and tried to explain the central features of Mencian morality through the lens of Kant’s transcendental notions. In this respect, he found that the moral philosophy of heart-mind and inner nature implies the highest dignity of human beings as moral agents; in this regard, it also included concepts comparable to Kant’s free will. However, in his view, Kant did not succeed in establishing a genuinely moral metaphysics (*daodedi xingshangxue* 道德的形上學) because he regarded notions such as the free will merely as postulates, concepts, or ideas. According to Mou Zongsan, moral notions had to be seen as real entities that concretely come into appearance or become present (*chengxian* 呈現) through the moral practice and cultivation of individuals. On such grounds, Mou aimed to establish a genuine moral metaphysics in contrast to Kant’s metaphysics of morality (*daodedi xingshangxue* 道德底形上學), which in his view could only function as a mere methodological framework for systems of moral thought. In Li’s view, however, Mou did not truly manage to upgrade Kant’s philosophy, for he was unable to escape the inner contradiction of Neo-Confucian philosophies, which, as we have seen, aimed to establish dualist models in a holistic “one-world” framework.

Regarding the traditional Chinese philosophy as such, Mou has mainly elaborated on the so-called Lu-Wang stream of the Neo-Confucian philosophy.²⁴

23 In this regard, Li explains that he understood Western substance primarily as modernization, which cannot be equated with Westernization, even though modernization undoubtedly began in the West (*ibid.*, 156). Hence, the concept *yong*, or function, understood to be specific and culturally determined mode of production, reproduction, and lifestyles, assumes a crucial significance for Li, for it defines the concrete circumstances of individuals in society (Rošker 2019, 175).

24 According to Li Zehou (2008c, 322, n. 2), Mou Zongsan has divided Neo-Confucian thought into three philosophical streams: the first was based on the interpretations of Confucian *Analects*, and *Mengzi*. This stream, the so-called Lu-Wang school, was established by Lu Jiuyuan 陸九淵 (1139–1192) and later further developed by Wang Yangming (1472–1529). The second mainly followed the theories of the *Great Learning* (*Da xue* 大學) and is widely known as the Cheng-Zhu school, for their main representatives were Cheng Yi (1033–1107) and Zhu Xi (1130–1200). The third was represented by Hu Hong 胡宏 (1105–1161) and Liu Zongzhou 劉宗周 (1578–1645), who were mainly elaborating on the

Because in a certain sense the school guided by Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi was also upgrading several approaches derived from Xunzi's philosophy, Mou has regarded these two rationalist philosophers as heretical, and their philosophy as "deviations from the orthodox Confucian teachings" (*bie zi wei zong* 別子為宗). Hence, he tried to establish his new moral metaphysics on the grounds of the Lu-Wang school. He was not interested in rational metaphysics of morality, but rather in the possibility of achieving practical bodily experience of metaphysical substance through morality. Therefore he believed that the Neo-Confucian concept of inner nature (*xing*), which is in their discourses a transcendent notion, could not be detached from the concept of the heart-mind (*xin*), which belongs to the empirical realm. Although they are two separate entities, the innate moral substance (*xingti* 性體) and the substance of heart-mind (*xinti* 心體) are continuously being unified in the process of their endless mutual interaction (Li Zehou 2008c, 323). Therefore, they both belong to moral practice and can actually be equated to the original Confucian notion of humaneness (*ren*). Mou wrote:

The entire content of humaneness is embedded into the original heart-mind, which can be equated to the innate moral substance ... Humaneness, which is the origin of all morality, is simultaneously the substance of our innate moral nature. This innate moral nature is being absorbed by humaneness, and humaneness is being absorbed by the heart-mind. In this way, the existence is being absorbed by action, and hence, we can speak about moral practice.

仁之全部義蘊皆收於道德的本心中，而本心即性 ... 作為一切道德之源之仁，亦即是吾人性體之實也。此惟是攝性於仁，攝仁於心，攝存有於活動，而自道德實踐以言之。

MOU ZONGSAN 1973, 26

He also pointed out that Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi viewed the relation between the substance of inner nature and the heart-mind in a completely different way, for they considered both concepts to be a part of the all-encompassing structural pattern (*li*). In this way, they have only elaborated on existence without considering its inseparable connection to human actions and moral practice. Hence, Mou regarded their philosophy as a mere theoretical metaphysics or an empty logical structure based on and limited to speculative abstractions (Li Zehou 2008c, 323).

Doctrine of the Mean (Zhong yong 中庸) and on the *Commentaries to the Book of Changes (Yi zhuan 易傳)*.

As we have already seen, Li has also questioned Mou's interpretation of the relation and interaction between the empirical and the transcendental self, i.e., between the "inner sage and external ruler" (*neisheng waiwang*). Because Chinese culture has a tradition of moral subjectivity but no tradition of intellectual and political subjectivity, it is strong with respect to the inner sage and weak with respect to the external ruler. As a consequence, Chinese culture encountered serious challenges from Western culture in modern times (Gu 2018, 78). To modernize Chinese culture, it is necessary to reconceive and renovate these aspects of the Confucian tradition.

Mou Zongsan has attempted to develop the external ruler in order to enable the free progress of science and technology, which in the history of Chinese traditional thought and culture have always been repressed. He constructed the basic shift, which could cause such an enforced development of the "external ruler" by means of a conscious self-negation (*ziwo kanxian* 自我坎陷) of the "inner sage." However, this self-negation of the (moral) subject was seen as a merely temporary phase in a "dialectical process" (Rošker 2016, 88), for if the static, primary position of morality precluded a recognition of the full plurality of knowledge, its total absence would have devastating consequences for society, which would become like "a lone boat without a compass, tossed in a stormy, limitless sea" (He Xinquan 2000, 93–95). In the dialectical process that linked the possible acquisition of scientific knowledge with axiological regulation (or moral guidance), the moral reason (*daode lixing* 道德理性) was thus seen as a "bridge connecting Confucianism with modern democracy" (*ibid.*, 97).

In simple terms, Mou's theory is to call on the moral subject who has attained sageliness to stoop down to the level of ordinary life, thereby engaging in activities of democracy and science. What forms the philosophical basis of his new theory is an integration of the heart-mind thought of Confucius, Mencius, Lu Xiangshan, and Wang Yangming with Kant's philosophy. Mou's theory is certainly modern and innovative in its ideas, but it has obvious drawbacks.

GU 2018, 78

Irrespective of the purely theoretical difficulties of such an endeavor, Li Zehou emphasized that such a proposal was redundant, because the solution of the problem had to be sought in a more radical procedure: in Li's view, the whole traditional model of the inner sage and external ruler had to be eliminated or "broken" (Li Zehou 2008c, 332) because its very structure implied a superiority and absolute dominance of the former upon the latter. Being posited into such a subordinated position, in Li's view the "external ruler" could

never be developed high enough to function in a modern society with highly developed democracy, technology, and modern social morality. Besides, Li highlights the fact that Mou Zongsan overlooked the much more positive tradition of the external ruler, namely the one that was pioneered by Xunzi who explored people's relations with the natural world and presented thereby some exquisite insights into the inner workings of the cosmos. However, this is not surprising if we consider that Xunzi's line of Confucianism was not regarded as the orthodox one. This prejudice was shared by almost all Modern Confucian scholars. Besides, to argue that Chinese tradition completely lacks intellectual and political subjectivity means to ignore an important aspect of the Neo-Confucian Confucian tradition, which is the core of the Great Learning and was sanctioned by the Cheng-Zhu school and later continuously promoted by numerous Confucians. This is the percept of investigating the (external) object in order to achieve the ultimate knowledge (*gewu zhizhi* 格物致知). Zhu Xi explained this conceptualization (which doubtless included some foundations that could be developed in terms of scientific exploration), in the following way:

Investigate things to acquire the ultimate knowledge: this means that your heart-mind has to be appropriated, and you should always act according to a sincere mind. In this way, you can cultivate your own self, order your family, participate in state affairs and maintain peace for all under heaven.

格物、致知事；此是正心、誠意事；此是修身事；此是齊家、治國、平天下事。

Zhu Xi s.d., Gang ling: 22

In his own reconceptualization of “inner sage and external ruler” Li has an advantage over Modern New Confucians. While the latter have an idealistic conceptual grounding, Li has formulated a practical philosophy based on his idea of the two kinds of morality (Gu 2018, 79). In such an arrangement, the external ruler would represent a concept pertaining to the modern social morality, while the inner sage would belong to the realm of traditional religious morality. In this framework, the basic position would be occupied by the external ruler. This means that modern law, science, and technology would assume the prior and dominant position, which also implies that the society is defined by a priority of right over good. Similar to the very concept of private religious morality, the traditional “inner sage” would in this modified model merely adopt the “regulative and properly constitutive” function (Li Zehou 2010, 11–12).

In contrast to Li, who regarded Confucianism as a kind of semi-religion and semi-philosophy, Mou Zongsan believed it was a kind of religion, for it was based upon the notion of sacred inner morality. Li radically questions Mou's view that Confucianism only represents the moral metaphysics of the heart-mind and inner nature. He believes that this is how Mou reduced this ancient philosophy to a doctrine, limited to religious thought (Li Zehou 1999, 1). Li sharply criticized the complicated and purely academic nature of this religious theory:

Although Mou Zongsan emphasizes the religious nature of Confucianism, he overlooks the practical influence and the popular potential that should be parts of any religion. Mou describes this religion in a very mystical, speculative, and purely academic or theoretical way that is very difficult for ordinary people to understand. His highly elevated, noble theories have no connection with the concrete society. In this way, Mou has actually lost the essence of the truly religious elements that are included in Confucianism.

牟宗三雖然強調了儒學的宗教性，但由於忽視了宗教所應有的現實作用和通俗性能，扁仍然把儒學的宗教性弄了凡人難懂的書齋理論，玄奧思辨和高頭講章，於大眾生活和現實社會完全脫節。這就恰恰失去了儒學所具有的宗教性的品格和功能。

LI ZEHOU 1995, 30

Because of his difficult language and due to the highly theoretical nature of his work, Mou is actually very similar to those scholars who see Confucianism strictly as a philosophy and whom he sharply criticizes (*ibid.*).

However, the main point of Li's critique on Mou Zongsan is linked to his basic methodological approach, namely, to his concept of the so-called immanent transcendence. As we have seen, Mou Zongsan aimed to interpret Chinese philosophy through this concept, in which rational and spiritual notions possess a double ontological nature. Therefore, each of them must simultaneously belong to both the transcendent and the immanent realm. Li Zehou sharply opposed this idea and believed that it is incompatible with his own one-world paradigm.

He believed that this huge contradiction can be traced back to the Neo-Confucianism of the Song and Ming periods. However, because Mou tried to place it into the Kantian framework, it became even more problematic. In the foreword to his *Five Essays From 1999*, Li offered a simple explanation of this contradiction:

On the one hand, the theory of immanent transcendence emphasizes the continuation of the Confucian tradition. In this regard, it negates the existence of transcendent, external deities and places the moral imperative upon the fundamentals such as “the unity of human heart-mind and the heart-mind of heaven” or “the unity of human inner nature and the sacred inner nature.” In this framework, the innermost heart-mind and inner nature represent the basis of substance. On the other hand, it imitates the Western “two-world view,” a framework that separates heaven and the worldly people, the world of ideas and the world of social reality, substance and phenomena.

一方面強調遵循儒學傳統，否認外在超驗的上帝神明，把道德律令建立在“人心即天心”、“人性即神性”，即將內在心性作為本體的基礎之上；另一方面又模擬西方“兩個世界”（天堂與人世、理念世界與現實世界、本體與現象界）的構架。

LI ZEHOU 2003b, 133

In this schema, the human heart-mind and their inner nature are necessarily transcendent. In Western philosophy, transcendence means something that surpasses the empirical world. Hence, the transcendent (God) decides, determines, and guides humankind—including all human experience. But this is not true in reverse as human beings cannot determine (and not even influence) God. Everything that exists in reality belongs therefore to the appearances; substance or essence is only that which surpasses this reality (or the realm of experiences). The traditional Chinese culture, which deals with everything from the perspective of the one-world view, is fundamentally different.

On the one hand, (the Modern Confucians) emphasize Chinese tradition with its “unity of humans and nature” or its “unity of the moral and empirical self,” but on the other hand, they held notions such as “humaneness,” “compassion,” or “innate knowledge” that can never be divided from sensitivity and emotions to be immanent transcendental notions or notions of immanent transcendence. In this way, they create a huge contradiction between the transcendental (i.e., that which is transcendent, that is, not connected to sensitivity) and the empirical (i.e., that which is inward and connected to sensitivity) or between deities or God on the one side, and concrete, real people on the other.

一方面既強調中國傳統的“即人即天”，“性體”即“心體”；另一方面，又要將本不能脫離感性以及感情的“仁”、“惻隱之心”、“良知”，說成是內在的“超越” (transcendent) 或“先驗” (transcendental)，便不能不產生

既超驗 (與感性無關, 超越) 又經驗 (與感性有關, 內在), 既神聖 (上帝) 又世俗 (人間) 的巨大矛盾。

ibid.

Li believes that Mou's conceptualizations cannot be combined with the traditional Chinese paradigm of the unity of heaven and people nor with the view that holds substance and function to be inseparable (*tīyong bu er* 體用不二), although even Mou's teacher Xiong has emphasized this aspect in his philosophy. Hence, Li repeatedly highlights that the Western notion of transcendence can by no means fit into the Chinese one-world view. Consequently it is completely wrong to lay stress upon the traditional Chinese notions of the unity of heaven and people, and not explain the concepts that are originally confined to the sphere of sensuality and emotions such as humaneness or inborn knowledge (*liangzhi* 良知) as something immanently transcendent or transcendental (Rošker 2019, 137). In this context, he also exposes (ibid.) that it was precisely due to the one world-view that the social and ideational development in ancient China could lead to the culture of pleasure (*legan wenhua* 樂感文化) because in such a holistic system people could have no tensious relation (*jinzhang guanxi* 緊張關係) toward external deities or fear of a god.

As already mentioned, Li claims that all such inconsistencies and contradictions are rooted in the Song period's Neo-Confucianism. He regrets that Modern Confucianism has not succeeded to generate truly innovative philosophical approaches or theoretical advances that could function as a basis for future philosophical detections or novel philosophical systems (Li Zehou 1999, 8).

3 From Kant to Marx and Back

As an important part of his anthro-po-historical ontology, Li Zehou's ethics is based upon the methodology of historical materialism. In this regard, he relied on Marxist sources of inspiration. He was profoundly influenced by Marx' earlier works, especially by his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts from 1844*, and adopted the basic paradigms on which they were grounded, particularly their basic assessment, according to which the historical development of humankind was based upon material foundations. This view was rooted in Hegel's dialectical view of history, but Marx has substituted the idealistic Hegelian foundation with Feuerbach's materialistic groundwork.

Li's basic paradigms were tightly connected to the early Marxist view of the human being as a living being capable of producing and reproducing the

elementary conditions of his/her existence through the making and using of tools. According to Li, this ability represents the characteristic feature of humanness, which means that the production and application of technology is that which essentially makes human beings human. In this context, Li also assumed the early Marxist humanism promoted in Marx's theories of human value and his critique of alienation. Both of these elements represent important factors of Li's ethical theory.

On the other hand, he disapproves of Marx's later economic theories, which mainly criticized the structural grounds, historical conditions, and the functioning of the capitalist mode of production. Li pointed out that in these later theories, which form the essential part of his most famous book *Das Kapital*, Marx has linked the "two-fold character of commodities" with the "two-fold character of labor," claiming that "exchange value" was a result of "abstract labor." Li criticized this view in which the exchange of commodities was determined by an overall abstraction from use value, because for him, such ideas that were formulated in Marx's theory of the "socially necessary labor time" are sensible only in rational analyses and cannot function in empirical reality. Because of this, Li reproaches Marxist economic theories with an artificial separation of human labor from concrete human life. Li emphasizes that in such abstract view, the "labor-power" has nothing to do with actual human practice of making and using tools, which differs according to various societies, cultures, and developmental stages of history. In such a framework, Marx has attempted to verify his concept of surplus value through a homogenized and overgeneralized concept of the "expenditure of human labor-power." Due to such abstractions, in Li's view he has unconsciously reproduced abstract Hegelian idealistic speculations, which were actually in contradiction with his basic materialist view of history. Hence, Marx's idea of communism basically rests on a Hegelian, purely logical inference regarding abstract labor. Because Marx did not take into consideration any of the complex, historically determined factors that were, in Li's view, distinctly influencing human development, he managed to reduce it to a mechanistic model of abstract relations between the class of the owners of the means of production and commodity-possession on the one hand, and the working class on the other. In such a synthetic model, theoretical concepts such as class struggle or proletarian revolution functioned as a central force of social development. According to Li, this idea of class struggle between the capital and the labor has led Marx to the necessity of eliminating the market-guided production of commodities. Li believes that such logic is tricky, for it has no relation to the actual material practice, which is the fundamental element of genuine historical materialism (Li Zehou 2006, 141).

Li compares such models of thought with Kant's notion of "transcendental illusion" (see Kant 1998, 389 /B359/)²⁵ and demonstrates the problems arising from them with the example of the system of equal distribution, which has been implemented in the Chinese "people's communes" during the first decades after the constitution of the People's Republic. This system attempted to achieve equality and justice in society. However, due to the fact that its founders did not consider the empirical factors determining human practices and interpersonal relations, it led to a deterioration of economy: even though it succeeded in establishing equality of economic wages, the overall living standard and the quality of people's life stagnated and even declined (ibid., 146). Hence, for Li, it is quite understandable that Marx's economic ideas could not be further advanced within general outlines of prevailing economic theories and that his concept of labor value was substituted with various price theories.

However, because he considered the basic Marxian paradigm of historical materialism to be immensely important for the establishment of his own philosophical theory, Li still regards himself as a Marxist philosopher, although with some reservations (Li Zehou 2016d, 1). He also exposed that in several aspects, Marxism is compatible with Confucianism. First of all, Confucianism is in his view also a materialistic discourse. Besides, the Marxist view of the communist system is also comparable to certain Confucian ideals; he exemplifies this idea by quoting a passage from *The Book of Rites*:

Commodities should not be thrown to the ground; people must not store them only for themselves, and neither should they employ the power of others only for themselves.

貨惡其棄於地也，不必藏於己；力惡其不出於身也，不必為己。

Li ji s.d., Li yun: 1

In Li's view, such sections of Confucian texts can be associated with certain communist devices such as "From each according to his abilities to each

25 Li considers the abovementioned abstracted concepts as a form of Kantian "transcendental illusions." In his view, they represent conceptions of objects that can only be thought of, but not known, because they are shaped through abstract reasoning without any empirical foundation. They are cognitive illusions produced by the transcendental reason. Such transcendental illusions are still actively effective in guiding and organizing human thought, for they help us achieve the greatest possible unity of reason (Kant 1998, 389 /B359/). In this regard they positively influence human ability to act and to change the world. Hence, they have a profound philosophical significance. However, because of their transcendental nature, i.e., because they are completely separated from the empirical world, they cannot be directly applied in concrete strategies and policies of actual societies (see Rošker 2019, 26).

according to his needs.” Hence, he actually considers himself to be a “Confucian Marxist” (Li Zehou 2016d, 1).²⁶

Li Zehou was influenced by Marx from an early age. Later, during the late sixties and early seventies when he started to study Kant’s transcendental philosophy, he was immediately captivated by the German philosopher’s highlighting the idea of the human subject as a free, active, and morally autonomous agent.

As is well known, the notion of human subjectivity in Kant’s philosophy was rooted in the transcendental forms, which were *a priori* structures of human mind. As such, they have distinctly determined and redesigned the human perception of objective reality. In Kant’s philosophy, such forms were independent of human experience. In this regard, Li’s theory is different: although he also presumed the existence of similar forms determining human consciousness, he placed them into a scheme of historical materialist development derived from early Marx.²⁷ In his later evaluation of his *Critique of Critical Philosophy: A New Approach to Kant*, Li described the elementary grounds on which he attempted to connect Kant with Marx and to upgrade their theories with Confucian thought:

On the surface, this book explains Marx proceeding from Kant, but actually, it begins with Marx and returns then to Kant. It proposes a new explanation of the origins and the shaping of the seemingly “transcendental” forms and structures of cognition, morality, and aesthetics from the perspective of the material practice and social relations, in which human beings produce and apply tools, and which represent the basis of their sustainable existence. This means that Kant has been turned upside down.

本書表層述評是由康德講到馬克思，實際上是由馬克思回到康德，即由人以製造—使用工具的物質實踐活動和社會關係作為生存基礎，提出和論說似乎是“先驗”的認識、道德、審美的心理形式結構的來由和塑建，這就把康德顛倒了過來。

LI ZEHOU 2016d, 1

26 In Li’s synthesis between Kantian and Confucian ethics, Confucian ethics actually plays the primary role. Kantian ethics is a mere supplement (Li Zehou 2016b, 212). Therefore, it is not surprising that he devotes only two chapters of *Critique of Critical Philosophy* to Kant’s *Critique of Practical Reason*.

27 Although the basic conceptualization of this framework, in which Li established his notion of human subjectivity can be traced back to Hegel, he placed these dynamic and alterable forms onto materialist foundations. Hence, his theory still belongs to the discourses of historical materialism.

Although early Kant was profoundly influenced by the germs of modern liberal individualism, Li Zehou does not see a strong notion of the atomic individual in his work, especially regarding his later, mature philosophy. He sees this later Kantianism as being in direct communication with Hegel and Marx (Li, Zehou 2016, 1116). His inheritance of Kant diverges greatly from that of various forms of liberalism. It is in this context that Li finds his way back to Kant through the theories of Hegel and Marx (*ibid.*, 1117). Hence, he analyses Kant's work as linked to and in line with these to pioneers of historical materialism. In other words, he sees Kant as a crucial pivot from the individualism of thinkers like Locke and Rousseau to the collectivist outlooks of Hegel and Marx. Li explains:

When I take the transformative and innovative approach of looking at Kant through Hegel and Marx, it does not negate Kant's own thought but rather provides a critical new way by which to understand Kant.

ibid.

His discussion of Kant through the lens of Hegel's and Marx's ideas of historical process and material life diverges considerably from numerous other interpretations of Kant's thought. Through such perspective, Li aimed to relocate Kant's transcendental forms into a dynamic and historical context, defined by the principles of a materialist development of humankind. Simultaneously, Li altered the teleological and deterministic Marxist view of social development, which can in its basic dialectical framework be traced back to Hegel through the stimulating element of such an autonomous, i.e., morally aware human subject who is not only defined by his or her materialist practice, but also unpredictable and by no means completely determined by the laws of social development. In such a system, the formations of the human mind were no longer absolutely permanent, stagnant, and therefore persistent and even predetermined. Similar to the sedimented layers of earth, sand, and clay from ancient times, they were only seemingly permanent from the viewpoint of individuals. From the viewpoint of humankind as a unified historical body, which evolved through millions of years, they are by no means *a priori*.

In such an upgrading, the "meeting point" of Marx and Kant was for Li especially relevant (Li Zehou 2016, 154). He has reshaped, altered, and modified the basic paradigms of these two German philosophers, and combined them into a theoretical system that differed from both theories.

He agreed with Marx's presumption that tools represented the basic means of production. Nevertheless, he saw Marx's further evolvement of this theory as problematic because he saw it as being one-sided: progress

from means of production to the relations of production and then on to the superstructure only concerned the external developments of the relation between the manufacture and use of tools. At this point, Li was more interested in their internal influences, i.e., in the ways in which the making and use of tools has reshaped human mind. In other words, Li was interested in establishing and investigating the phenomenon of the cultural-psychological formations that were shaped in human inwardness in this process.

ROŠKER 2019, 27

Li's elevation of Marxist theory is also visible in his development of the non-alienated relation between men and nature. As we have seen, he enriched the significance of Marx's vision of the "humanization of nature" (*ziran de renhua* 自然的人化), by complementing it with the corresponding concept, "naturalization of humans" (*rende ziranhua* 人的自然化).

Besides criticizing Marx through the lens of Kant's transcendental illusion, he also questioned certain basic approaches of the latter through the elementary notions of the former. Although Kant never explained the origins of his transcendental forms, and merely stressed that they were prior to any experience, Li believes to have found their genesis. In his theory, the formations of perception and cognition arose from collective human experience through the long-lasting process of sedimentation, by which the empirical is being transformed into the transcendental (*jingyan bian xianyan*). This process of transformation is always embedded in the cultural-psychological formations (*wenhua-xinli jiegou*) of human beings.

Kant and Marx were important not only in regard to Li's general theory but also for the establishment of his ethics. Even though in general, he remained loyal to the conceptual framework of Marxist historical materialism, he also upgraded it by exposing the problem of the active and autonomous human potential through his concept of subjectality (*zhutixing* 主體性). He established and applied this notion to ground human agency in the historically conditioned and environmentally subsumed, but nonetheless conscious, subject. Such a view has essentially modified the understanding of consciousness, which was in Marx's theory limited to a merely mechanical reflection of the material world. Through its conceptualization of subjectality, Li's theory surpassed the deterministic view of history and emphasized the importance of coincidental factors in its development (Li Zehou 2017a, 60).

As we have seen in the previous chapters, subjectality is tightly connected to material practice of human beings. Li Zehou's concept of practice, however, differs from that originally established by Marx. On the one hand, Li approved Marx's emphasis on the prime position of objective conditions, productive

forces, and the material base. On the other hand, however, he departs from traditional Marxism because he believes that we cannot separate the objective contents of human practice from all those features that constitute human beings as autonomous subjects, particularly in terms of their creativity, innovativeness, and their willingness to act. However, it would be wrong to reduce Li's philosophy to a simple combination of these two important European thinkers. On the contrary: "He uses Marx as his starting point to reexamine issues initiated by Kant and then deals with unsolved problems arising from these considerations" (Ding 2002, 247). With such a theoretical reinterpretation of the human subject and her autonomous agenda, Li wanted to surpass Kant's idealist standoff and to reestablish a new understanding of Kant's transcendental philosophy by positioning it into a historical and materialist context. In this regard, Li criticized Kant's rationality because of its lack of any social and historical perspective. In his understanding, Kant reduced the human subject to a stagnant entity, determined to a large extent by structural relationships between transcendental forms, subjective principles, and objective settings.

In giving Kant's notion of subjectivity a holistic, historicist turn, Li argues that all subjective structures are the products of historical process. They are not empty, but have their concrete, historical contents. As for the formation of these structures, the material, productive activities of practice are the determining factor.

GU XIN 1996, 224

In this way, Li enhanced the traditional historical materialist concept of practice by complementing Marx through Kant and in turn by expanding the latter through the former. Following this approach, subjectivity as a mental formation is surpassing the mere subjective awareness of individuals, for it also pertains to collective human history and those of its products, which materialize themselves in developments of intellectual and spiritual cultures, as well as in formations of ethical and aesthetic awareness (Li Zehou 2001, 43).²⁸

While he endorsed Marx's socialist ideals, he also valued Kant's important role in the consolidation of the ethical principles of enlightenment, his notions of human freedom, dignity and autonomy, and his rejection of feudalism, epitomised in his calls for autonomy, independence, and equality (Li Zehou 2007, 302). For Li, Kant was also a most relevant pioneer of modern

²⁸ In his understanding, early Marx was still interested in sociality, while the post-Marxist theoreticians increasingly concentrated on the purely individual notion of human subjectivity. For Li, this was the chief common mistake of most "trendy" contemporary theories that arose in the Western philosophy throughout the 20th century.

deontological ethics, established upon the notion of the inner moral responsibility as an inseparable part of humanness. However, in his view, Kant's proscription of using human beings as means to achieve certain other goals does not belong to the elements constituting the inner arrangement of the categorical imperative.

In my view, the two notions of "universal legislation" and "free will," which belong to the three propositions of Kant's "categorical imperative," also represent formal structures of human psychology that were shaped through millions of years. But the third proposition, i.e., his notion of "human beings as ends" is actually not a part of the "categorical imperative." In a certain sense it is universal, but it also includes ideals and hence, it belongs to modern social morality.

康德著名的三條“絕對律令”(categorical imperative), 我以為其中“普遍立法”和“自由意志”兩條, 也是百萬年人類心理塑建的形式結構。“人是目的”則並非“絕對律令”, 它是具有某種普遍性並兼理想性的現代社會性道德。

LI ZEHOU 2016d, 2

Nevertheless, Li certainly admires Kant's concept of the categorical imperative and even though he does not agree with him in the presumption that the notion of human beings as ends is a part of such an absolute criterion of moral actions, he still emphasizes that, in essence, this idea is an important basis of modern ethics, which needs to be preserved and developed.

According to Li, another weakness in Kant's philosophy is also his presumption that practical reason belongs to our inborn a priori forms; it is a historical concept formed through pragmatic necessities and based upon the demands of social life. Even though it is determined by the relatively stable formation of the free will, it contains ideas and concepts that are being changed in accordance with concrete circumstances and defined by the need for the preservation and the sustainable survival of the humankind as an entirety.

As we have seen in previous chapters, Li also criticizes the notion of ethical relativism, which is sometimes also understood as a necessary consequence of Kant's emphasis on the role of the human subject. Although Li Zehou admits that in politics, this idea can sometimes support and protect minorities and marginalized social groups, it fails to consider that all forms of ethics basically share the same universal forms. Therefore, he believes that ethical relativism actually neglects the free choice and the role of the human subject as an independent and autonomous agent (Chong 1999, 165).

In certain aspects, Li's particular critiques of Kant and Marx can be seen as somewhat problematic or simply too one-dimensional. In the following, I will begin with exposing these problems separately in regard to Marx and to Kant in order to illuminate through a contrastive analysis the culturally determined, paradigmatic background of Li's specific understanding of human beings and their historical evolvement.

In regard to Marx, Li seems to have misunderstood some of the crucial notions pertaining to the Marxist idea of humanism. At least in his young age, he interpreted Marx's idea of alienation in a somewhat peculiar manner. Li started to develop interest in the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts from 1844* since the 1950s, when he wrote his famous essay *Lun meigan, mei he yishu* 論美感, 美和藝術 (On the aesthetic feeling, beauty and art). Li wrote this essay at the age of twenty-six, which was exactly the age Marx was when he wrote his *Manuscripts*. Hence, Li's first interpretation of the Marxist term alienation can be seen as a dialogue between two very young philosophers from Europe and China, respectively, and it offers us an interesting insight into the nature of intercultural misunderstandings rooted in accustomed Western and Chinese thought patterns, respectively.

According to Marx (2007, 29), the estrangement of the workers from their products means not only that their labor becomes an object, an external existence, but that it exists outside them, independently, as something alien to them, and that it becomes a power that confronts them on its own. It means that the life they have conferred upon the object confronts them as something hostile and alien. The workers put their lives into the object and, consequently, their life no longer belongs to them but to the object. In developing his theory on estranged labor and alienation, Marx (2005, 42) described the phenomenon of the estrangement (*Entfremdung*) of human beings as a species from their human essence or their species-being (*Gattungswesen*). In Marx's view, this phenomenon is a consequence of forced, exploitative labor and of stratified social classes, because being a part of such institutions estranges people from their humanness.

In his abovementioned essay on the nature of aesthetic feeling, however, Li seems to have misunderstood the concept of alienation, for he endowed it with rather positive connotations. He wrote:

Nature as such is not beautiful. Beautiful nature is a product of socialization and a product of the objectivization (i.e., alienation) of the human essence.

自然本身並不是美, 美的自然是社會化的結果, 也就是人的本質對象化(異化)的結果。

He also wrote:

Humankind has created objects that caused nature to be socialized. Simultaneously, it also created a subject, which means that people achieved the ability to appreciate the beauty of nature. Hence, ultimately, the beauty of nature is a special form of existence of the beauty of social life (or the beauty of reality)—it is the form of existence of estrangement.

人類創造了客體對象，使自然具有了社會性，同時也創造了主體、自身，使人自己具有了欣賞自然的宙美能力。所以，歸根結蒂，自然美就只是社會生活的美（現實美）的一種特殊的存在形式，是一種“異化”的存在形式。

ibid., 59

In this passage, Li obviously equated “alienation” with a certain kind of “objectification” in the sense of the uniquely human capacity to establish mutually separated concepts of “subject” and “object.” For him, alienation was also a precondition or even a method of the specific human ability to project subjective feelings or sensations onto external objects, and hence, to consciously separate the objects of the external world from the internal world of the human subject.

In the limited framework of this book, we cannot go deeper into the reasons for this misunderstanding. However, it certainly has much to do with the fact that in the mid-20th century China, the establishment of a clear separation line between the subject and the object of comprehension was still a most urgent and progressive endeavor.

As we have seen above, Li exposed that Marxist ideas such as socially necessary labor time were derived from the concept of abstract human labor. He reproached Marx with a denial of any of the complex, historically determined elements (as for instance, the developmental stage of technologies in different societies and cultures). However, this critique seems to be too superficial, for in his definition of the socially necessary labor time, Marx explicitly wrote about the importance of these factors, which are historically and culturally defined and represent important elements of the category of the socially necessary labor time. These elements can vary throughout different societies and they profoundly influence the value of particular individual and social labor. Marx has defined the socially necessary labor time under consideration of specific social conditions, the average degree of skill and the intensity prevalent in concrete historical periods:

The labor time socially necessary is that required to produce an article under the normal conditions of production, and with the average degree of

skill and intensity prevalent at the time. The introduction of power-loom into England probably reduced by one-half the labour required to weave a given quantity of yarn into cloth. The hand-loom weavers, as a matter of fact, continued to require the same time as before; but for all that, the product of one hour of their labour represented after the change only half an hour's social labour, and consequently fell to one-half its former value.

MARX 2015, 29

Li's critique, which concentrates on his alleged separation of socially necessary labor time from the actual concrete conditions of the production, is therefore simply wrong. As we can see in the following quotation, Marx also explicitly emphasizes that productiveness is determined by various circumstances, the state of science, and the degree of its practical application, the social organization of production, the extent and capabilities of the means of production, and even by physical conditions of particular societies:

The value of a commodity would remain constant, if the labor time required for its production also remained constant. But the latter changes with every variation in the productiveness of labor. This productiveness is determined by various circumstances, amongst others, by the average amount of skill of the workmen, the state of science, and the degree of its practical application, the social organization of production, the extent and capabilities of the means of production, and by physical conditions.

ibid.

As we have seen, Li criticized Marx, among other issues, by claiming that in his system, it became necessary to eliminate the market-guided economy and to establish a planned economy. First of all, as Chandra (2002) shows, Marx has never strictly defined the concept of class, even though it allegedly belongs to the most central concepts of Marxism. And second, he never explicitly wrote about replacing the market-guided production of commodities with a systematized conceptualization of a planned economy.²⁹ Planned economy is a concept developed by the theoreticians of the Soviet-type state socialism.

29 Li claims, for instance, that a proof of Marx's proposal to establish a planned economy can be found in the chapter on the *The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof* of his *Das Kapital* (例如計劃經濟，在《資本論》“商品拜物教”一節裡可以找到依據) (Li Zehou 2016, 46). However, in this chapter, Marx only vaguely mentioned a “social plan” regarding the method of labor time evaluation in a classless society: “Labour time would, in that case, play a double part. Its apportionment in accordance with a definite social plan maintains the proper proportion between the different kinds of work to be done and the various wants of the community” (Marx 2015, 51).

On the contrary, Marx even criticized the germs of such theories as could be found in the works of several utopian socialists (*ibid.*, 56).

Regarding Li's reconceptualization of Kant's transcendental philosophy, the problem of its critique and integration into the theory of Li's anthropo-historical ontology becomes even more complicated. The question of gradual conversion of empirical elements into universal mental forms belongs to the key issues by which Li Zehou has altered and transformed Kant's views on pure and practical reason, on the very nature of perception and cognizance, and also on the autonomous human subject and his or her acting.

Numerous scholars believe that Li's theory can be considered as an upgrading or a completion of Kant's philosophy (e.g., Ding 2002, 248). However, such an interpretation is problematic, for Kant himself has often cautioned against a blending of the empirical with the rational, claiming that such procedures are unscientific and that the metaphysics of morality has to be cautiously purified of all empirical elements (Kant 2001, 23–24). Therefore, he would probably regard Li's approach as pure nonsense. Hence, Li's "transformation of empirical into the transcendental" (*jingyan bian xianyan* 經驗變先驗) is not an element that could directly be compatible with, or even assimilated into, Kant's transcendental philosophy. Because it rests on dynamic and holistic paradigms, which form a specific framework of Chinese philosophy, it cannot be compared or even denoted as "an upgrading" of Kant's transcendental philosophy, but rather as an independent and unique theory.

On the other hand, however, we cannot but emphasize that Li's theory is definitely a kind (although a "different" kind) of philosophy in spite of the Eurocentric interpretations of suchlike methodological approaches, which can be found in Kant's as well as in Marx's work. While the latter describes his concept of the "Asiatic Mode of production" through the lens of the alleged immaturity of the Asian people, which is allegedly reflected in their "inability to separate themselves from Nature" (Marx 2015, 52), Kant explicitly states (2001, 6) that such modes of thought "do not deserve the name of philosophy" at all.

Irrespective of what one might think of such approaches, it seems certainly better and more suitable to categorize Li's ethical system as a theory that rests on completely different paradigms that are not comparable to (and, even less compatible with) the ones that determine Kant's and also Marx's referential framework. Instead of speaking of Li's theory as a system based upon Kantian and Marxist approaches, it could be claimed that for Li, their theories were a valuable source of inspiration. They merely stimulated his creativity and thus supported the creation of his philosophical system, which is definitely more than a mere hybrid blending of Marx and Kant.

4 Further Dialogues with the West

The problems linked to different frameworks of reference are by no means limited to Li Zehou's elaborations on Kant and Marx, but also have to be kept in mind whenever we aim to compare his theory to any of those belonging to various discourses of Western ethics. In many particular aspects, different models of Western ethical thought have also served him as inspiring objects of investigation, critiques, and comparisons, though not to such an extent as those generated by Marx and Kant. Li is familiar with the works of all important premodern and modern Western theoreticians of ethics and frequently comments on their theories, often also critically comparing them to the Chinese tradition and/or his own ethical work. In contrast to numerous other Chinese scholars who almost exclusively focus upon their own tradition, Li does not support a separation between Chinese and Western thought and is strongly against such an isolation or alienation of his tradition. A dialogue with other philosophical theories is for him the best way to develop Chinese thought and at the same time, the most efficient method of breaking beyond the global domination of Greco-European philosophical discourses (Li, Zehou 2016, 1075). Hence, besides being established within a revival of the Chinese tradition, his theories are also based upon absorptions and incorporations of those aspects of Western ethics that he considers to be beneficial and reasonable.

Such an attitude is in line with his famous inversion of Zhang Zhidong's slogan, "Preserving the Chinese substance and applying the Western function" (*Zhongti Xiyong* 中體西用). At the edge of modernity, this slogan was promoted by conservatives who claimed that in the process of modernization, China should preserve its own ideational tradition, which should serve as the essence of society. China should not assume Western thought but only apply Western technology.

Li's reversed formulation, "Assuming Western substance and applying Chinese function" (*Xiti Zhongyong* 西體中用) was harshly criticized by a vast number of Chinese scholars who reproached him for holding a completely anti-traditional and pro-Western position. However, such a critique was absolutely groundless, for Li never meant to imply anything like this. Even in the heady days of the anti-traditional fever of the early 1980s, Li did not endorse the fashionable idea of "wholesale Westernization" and consistently emphasized the importance of the Chinese ideational tradition (Chan 2003, 110–111). In this regard, Li clarifies that he sees "Western substance" (*ti* 體) primarily as modernization, which cannot be equated with Westernization, even though modernization undoubtedly began in the West (Li Zehou 1998: 156). Hence, the

concept “function” (*yong* 用) conveyed the culturally determined mode of life, production, and reproduction: in this sense, it assumes a crucial significance for Li, for it outlines the concrete circumstances of individuals in a society. Li believes that identifying with one’s own tradition is a precondition for the positive development of any individual or society. Hence, the methods of modernization that correspond to specifically Chinese social conditions (i.e., the “Chinese function”) is immensely relevant to the future of the Chinese culture and society. In this sense, “function 用” is very important. According to Li, it is actually crucial (Li Zehou 2016e, 379). It defines the mode of transition toward a modern society, making it easier and more effective (Li Zehou 2002, 385).³⁰

Therefore, Western thought was an important brick in building his philosophical and ethical system. His intellectual interaction with the West was not so much focused on classical European ethics but dealt with early modern, modern, and current theories, beginning with Kant and his contemporaries.

Although Li Zehou believes that morality is based on reason rather than emotion, and even though in this respect he is closer to Kant than to David Hume,³¹ he often suggests that in a coherent ethical system, the theoretical framework of the former should be complemented by certain elements of the latter; just like in Chinese philosophy, Xunzi should be complemented by Mengzi (Li Zehou 2017a, 59–60). This fits well into his theory of the Chinese emotional cosmology (*youqingyuzhouguan* 有情宇宙觀) and is tightly linked to his concept of emotion-based substance (*qing benti* 情感本體). His endeavor to include human emotion and moral sentiment into ethics is logically consistent because in his own ethical system reason can never be completely divided from emotion, albeit it should occupy the primary and vital position in moral decisions and actions. Therefore the concept of emotio-rational structure of the human mind (*qingli jiegou* 情理結構), is a relevant factor in Li’s ethics.

By complementing Kant with Hume, Kant’s practical reason could be elevated above his originally purely formal status:

This is why I say that Kant’s capacity of human nature (the condensation of reason) has to be complemented by Hume’s sentiment of humanness.

30 For a more detailed description of the entire debate on this reversal, see Rošker 2019, 172ff.

31 In his essay entitled “Response to Paul Gauguin’s Triple Question,” Li emphasizes: “I am in fact a Kantian in regard to ethics, not a Humean. I always stress that individuals follow morality only when reason rather than emotion is in control over their moral psychological structure. I also expressly elaborated on this view at the conference. I indicated that Hume could only be a supplement to Kant, that reason absolutely must not become a slave to emotions. Reason is the impetus of morality, while emotions are merely helping hands” (Li, Zehou 2018, 27).

Only in this way, the categorical imperative would achieve a practical character instead of remaining merely a formal principle.

所以我說康德的人性能力（理性凝聚）要加上休謨的人性情感，絕對律令才不會是形式原則而有實踐品格。

LI ZEHOU 2011a, 9

Precisely because of its emotion-based substance, Li believes that the Chinese ethical tradition can surpass the dividing line between Kant and Hume, between rationalism and empiricism (Li Zehou 2016c, 10).³² This is one of the reasons for his conviction that traditional Chinese ethics bears in itself the potential for becoming a new global ethics for the entire humankind (Li Zehou 2017a, 60). For Li, the moral sentiment cannot be reduced to Kant's feeling of respect, but also includes Hume's concept of empathy, which is comparable to Mengzi's feeling of commiseration (*ceyin zhi xin* 惻隱之心). Both notions belong to the anticipative origins of moral conduct. However, while in Hume's ethics such feelings lie at the heart of morality, Li emphasizes that that they are merely an (albeit not unimportant) auxiliary force of otherwise rationally determined morality (*ibid.*, 61). He does not at all agree with Hume's famous saying, "Reason is, and ought only to be, the slave of the passions" (Hume 1817, 106). On the contrary: he exposes that Hume's idea of empathy is rooted in a type of natural instinct and determined by suffering and joy. It is grounded in animalistic biological needs and desires, which are not characteristics of human moral psychology. An empathetic heart is not automatically capable of implementing moral actions, and moral actions do not necessarily necessitate an empathetic heart as their motivation. Hence, Li insists on the view that moral actions always conform to reason. They are basically performances of duty, and are not connected with empathy.

Li Zehou also elaborated upon Hume's important distinction between facts and values, according to which human beings are unable to derive *ought* from *is*, because normative arguments cannot be grounded in the positive ones. Li claims to have found a solution for the dichotomy in the dynamic mutual amalgamation of facts and values:

In my philosophy, the problem of "is" and "ought to" that was first raised by Hume is solved by a unification of both elements.

32 However, Li also exposes that precisely because of its valuation of interpersonal emotion, traditional Chinese ethics is essentially closer to Hume than to Kant; it evaluates human emotion higher than mere reason (Li Zehou 2011a, 9).

我的哲學，就把休謨以來提的這個問題，is 和 ought to, “是”與“應該”，合起來了。

LI ZEHOU AND LIU YUEDI 2014, 201

Although in fact, a simple equation (or a simple causal inference) of facts and values lies at the core of Hume's problematization, Li does not see this unity as a problem in the first place. Facts and values are interactively embedded into a dynamic reciprocal relation in which they mutually influence one another. Even though on the formal, theoretical level the former precede the latter, normative propositions are not simply deducted from the positive ones. In such a schema, there is no fixed, motionless borderline between the two levels of ontology and axiology, respectively. The existence of facts as such is meaningless without the existence of values. And due to the fact that we are human beings, our existence is necessarily permeated with meaning, we can only exist in a realm of inseparability of facts and values. Therefore, all formal attempts to separate the two concepts are, in fact, irrelevant and artificial.

In Li's view, the alleged necessity of a strict separation of facts and values derives from the specific Western understanding of values, which are in the two-world schema reduced to axiological concerns. In this respect, Li rather assumes the traditional Chinese understanding, which identifies the “absolute good” with the sustainable existence and reproduction of the humankind through our vital practices.

I believe that according to the Confucian point of view, the original good, that is, the so-called goodness of humanness, is by no means a “good” that is separated from and stands in opposition to the “evil.” It is not a good derived from some ethical or moral standards. Similar to the idea that “the motion of the universe produces strength” it grounds in the human “emotional cosmology.” Humanness is originally without any connection to good or evil, for it can be expressed by notions such as “life equates humanness,” and “humanness includes bodily desires,” but from the viewpoint of humankind as a whole it can be endowed with the moral virtue of good. This also means that in the Chinese tradition, the sustainable extension and the vital practical activities of humankind are understood as the highest (ultimate) good. Therefore, it is a design in which human beings incorporate both reason and emotions.

我以為，從儒家來看，本源的善即所謂“人性善”的這個“善”，並不是與“惡”相區別而對立的那個善，並不是某種倫理道德規範的善，而是與“天

行健”一樣，是由人的“有情宇宙觀”在根本上把本無所謂善惡的“生之謂性”，“食色性也”的性，在人類總體意義上賦予善的品德。也就是說，中國傳統把人類的生存延續及人的生活實踐活動當作最高的善（至善）。因此，它只是對人的一種情感兼理性的設定。

LI ZEHOU 2016b, 222

This is clearly an opinion pertaining to evolutionary ethics, for it presupposes that human evolution has instilled human beings with a moral sense and with a disposition to be good. In such a view, the ultimate criterion of moral conduct is directly linked to the survival and reproduction of humankind. As is well known, evolutionary ethics has been challenged by George Edward Moore, who has faced it with his notion of naturalistic fallacy. Moore was an ethical nonnaturalist, which means that for him, morality cannot be defined; all attempts to define morality necessarily lead to fallacy. He explains that morality cannot be defined by any kind of natural properties; pleasure, for instance, can be defined by good, but good cannot be defined by pleasure. In this view, it would be fallacious to explain that which is good reductively in terms of natural properties such as “pleasant” or “desirable.” Simultaneously, Moore claims that the “question of how ‘good’ is to be defined, is the most fundamental question in all ethics” (Moore 2000, 57). Li would not have agreed with such a position, albeit he certainly agrees with the presumption, according to which, the “good” cannot be defined:

Regarding the question of what is good there are different opinions in different cultures and nations. It is impossible to find a consensus. Hence, we have to forget about it.

對於什麼是善，各個文化、各個民族的看法都不一樣，沒法取得共識，所以要與它脫鉤。所以，儒學無原罪或原惡，而只有原善。

LI ZEHOU 2016, 53

These difficulties (or the impossibility) of defining moral values such as “good” are shared by Moore and Li. For both men, the good needs to be understood in its own terms. Moore exposes that, like the notion yellow, good is a simple notion, which cannot be explained to anyone who does not already know it (Moore 2000, 59). According to him, this was the crucial flaw of the so-called natural ethics, which implied that what normally happens in nature should determine the way in which we act. In other words, it implied a simple equation of *is* and *ought*, of fact and value. He demonstrated that such definitions cannot

be correct by turning any proposed definition of good into a question. For instance, if we try to define good with the statement “Good is pleasurable,” then the question, “Is (everything) pleasurable good?” points to the fallacy of the definition.

Some scholars claim that Moore seems to imply that just like “yellow,” “good” is a kind of an intuitive knowledge and one that has a great intuitive force (see Stratton-Lake 2016, 11). Li sees Moore’s argument in a more differentiated way:

G.E. Moore believes that “good” is like “yellow,” namely, a self-evident intuitive axiom that cannot be defined. Because of this, he thinks it is important to analyze numerous moral terms, concepts, meanings of judgments, functions, and potentials in order to reveal the dominant position that has been held by the discipline of meta-ethics for many years and until the present day. But is moral psychology indeed just an intuitive judgment? When I participated in the aesthetic debate in the fifties, I exposed the intuitive nature of aesthetic feeling in my essay, “The Double Nature of Aesthetic Feeling.” Aesthetic intuition is certainly much more obvious and explicit than the moral intuition. But in conclusion, the majority of the scholars seemed to acknowledge the proposition of the practical aesthetics, according to which beauty and the aesthetic feeling both are derived from the practice of humankind. In this view, the aesthetic feeling is not just an undefinable sense. It is also not an animalistic biological intuition. Therefore, it is by no means a self-evident axiom but still a product of education, which is acquired on the basis of inborn physiology. The same applies to moral intuition.

摩爾（G.E. Moore）認為“善”（good）有如“黃”的顏色一樣，是不可定義、不容解說的直覺自明公理。因之重要的是去分析道德諸多語詞、概念、判斷的含義、作用、功能，從而開啟元倫理學（meta ethics）數十年至今的學院派統治。道德心理是否就是直覺判斷呢？在上世紀50年代的美學討論中，我在“美感兩重性”中便提出過美感直覺性問題，美感直覺比道德直覺遠為明顯突出。但討論的結果，似乎多數學人讚成實踐美學所提出的：美與美感均來自人類實踐，美感並非不可定義的感覺，也非動物性的生理直覺，更非自明公理，它仍然是在先天生理基礎上的後天培育成果。道德直覺當更如此。

LI ZEHOU 2016c, 7

To Li Zehou, there is no need to search for a formally justifiable definition of moral values, for in his view ethics can well be established without them. He emphasizes that in Chinese culture, for instance, the concept of good has

never been defined by its relation to evil. It was always self-evident, for its ultimate function was to preserve and develop the life of humanity.

Essentially, there was no place for evil in Chinese culture. It was seen as something contradicting life itself, and therefore, it was regarded as unimportant. Human beings have no original sin. On the contrary, the life of human beings and of everything that exists is good in itself.

中國傳統在本原上沒有惡的位置，惡是派生的，次要的。人生而無罪，相反，人和萬物的生，本身就是善。

LI ZEHOU 2016b, 223

From the viewpoint of Li's philosophical anthropology, this supposition naturally leads to the unification of facts and values, which was, as mentioned above, a crucial concern in his reconstruction of the classical question, posed by Hume.

The same applies for humanness. Humanness is originally good, which also implies that humanness ought to be good.

人性善依然，人性本善也就包含了人性應善。

ibid.

In this schema, the concept of good seems to be purely pragmatically defined, for that which is beneficial (for the existence and survival of humankind) is automatically good. But these germs of utilitarianism do not bear relevant fruits in Li's ethics. His system cannot be denoted as utilitarian even though he still endorses certain elements of this stream of thought, including the philosophy of its most famous pioneer, Jeremy Bentham. Li does not think his ideas are outmoded and writes explicitly: "I think utilitarianism is reasonable in certain ways and can or even should still be used in political policy making and the implementation of laws" (Li, Zehou 2016, 1081). However, he points out that Bentham's theory arises from the perspective of what the government should do to ensure people's happiness and cannot be extended to become a moral standard for individual behavior (ibid.). Li emphasizes that utilitarian rules cannot be used as abstract principles of justice, for moral valuations and decisions cannot be made without consideration of concrete circumstances determining different situations. In his view, Bentham's famous notion of "greatest happiness for the greatest number" can only refer to material aspects of life. Hence, Li connects Bentham's central notions of pleasure and pain to

his own materialist outlook because they are based on physical, bodily feelings, which means that they are directly related to concrete human existence and can thus provide the basis for certain ethical norms. For Li, this materialistic view on questions related to human happiness and well-being plays an important role in the constitution of political ethics. However, even on this strictly materialist level, happiness cannot be (as Bentham suggests) completely quantified.

In spite of this problem, Li does not think that John Stuart Mill's attempts to differentiate between greater and lesser kinds of happiness are reasonable, because such conditions are difficult to categorize or measure. On the other hand, Li endorses Mill's emphasis on long-term benefit over immediate pleasure and pain and his emphasis on the importance of human freedom and dignity. In Li's view, Mill does not belong to the orthodox line of utilitarianism because he was strongly influenced by European continental thought. Li emphasizes that these influences "make him more than just a British empiricist" (Li, Zehou 2016, 1082). Hence, he places Mill among the most important representatives of modern European liberalism.

As we have seen in previous chapters, Li has mixed feelings about this important stream of thought. He acknowledges its relevance for the establishment of important modern notions such as human rights or the value of individual freedom. However, he criticizes its exaggerated emphasis on the seemingly independent individual, which had begun with Thomas Hobbes and was later developed further by John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.³³ Li highlights that in such a view, human beings are understood as completely self-reliant entities. In this regard, Li rather relies on the traditional Chinese account, in which people are seen as being internally constituted through the social relationships in which they live.

On the other hand, Li is also highly skeptical about some central elements of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's thought, although he generally endorsed Hegel's conception of the first theoretical system based on the notion of historical change. Li agrees with Hegel's critique of Kant's formalism and with his replacement of Kant's moral mandate by an ethics that includes concrete historical contents. Without such specific contents provided by the actual social practices and institutions, Kant's principles would remain empty formulas.

33 In Li's view, early Kant was also profoundly influenced by such an understanding of the individual. However, in his later years, he began to move away from such notions toward a view advocating a collective constitution of human beings (Li, Zehou 2016, 1117). He sees Kant as "a crucial pivot from the individualism of thinkers like Locke and Rousseau to the collectivist outlooks of Hegel and Marx" (ibid.).

Even though he does not agree with the moral relativism implied in Hegel's position that what is real is rational, Li acknowledges the importance of his historicist methodology, which states that values, justice, politics, and education must be concretely analyzed and evaluated within specific historical conditions. On the other hand, he dislikes Hegel's notion of philosophy because he sees it as being reduced to abstract thought regarding truth or absolute concepts, which rests on inferences of strict logical thought inherited from ancient Greek philosophers. Thus, it is not surprising that "Hegel completely dismisses Confucius's aphoristic teachings on human conduct as nonphilosophical" (Li, Zehou 2016, 1072).³⁴

At first glance, it might seem as though Hegel would be the natural point of connection for Li's historical approach to human development (Garrison 2018, 126). He highlights that we have to learn from Hegel, for his outstanding sense of history belongs to the greatest contributions of modern European philosophy. Such a view clearly illuminates the development of human history as a totality. Besides, Hegel's emphasis on necessity and reason is also well established and of utmost importance.

On the other hand, Li claims that overall, Kant was much more insightful than Hegel, who remained trapped in an idealistic, pan-rational worldview. In contrast to him, Kant, who proceeded from a broader perspective, succeeded in raising the problem of subjectivity in a more comprehensive way. Hence, Li is suspicious of Hegel's ethical absolutism, which manifests itself in his totalitarian political theory and is rooted in his all-encompassing "rational state" (Chandler 2018, 302). In Hegel's system, the principle of totalistic subjectivity has become the single foundation of ethical normativity. In this context, Li also sharply criticizes Hegel's central concept of the "absolute Spirit" because it neglects the importance and the value of the individual human being. Hence, in this respect, it is doubtless better to follow the Marxist upgrading of Hegel's theory because Marx founded his principle of human subjectivity on the foundation of the material practice of the humankind. Gu Xin, however, points out that Hegel's notion of mediation shows that the subject in Hegel

34 For this reason, Hegel views the *Analects* as a collection of populist everyday sayings lacking any kind of conceptual rigor and logical force of a "real" philosophy. "Li admits that Confucius was not primarily interested exploring the metaphysical conditions of the universe and human life and instead was wholly preoccupied with introspections of how to live one's life fully under heaven and in society. Despite this, Li does not hesitate to regard Confucianism as a philosophy, because Confucius's major concerns are profound meditations on rational terms as he was engaged in investigating, demonstrating, and discovering reasons and rational categories by way of edifications and practical answers to his disciples' questions" (Gu Mingdong 2018, 76–77).

is not static but dynamic, not passive but active. Gu highlights that in Hegel's philosophy, the subject is not only a source of the mediating process, but is undistinguished from that process itself (Gu Xin 1996, 232):

In this light, we can say that it is irrelevant to differentiate Kant from Hegel with regard to whether or not they dealt with the problem of subjectivity. Actually, both Kant and Hegel paid great attention to it. The difference between them does not lie in that Kant intensifies while Hegel emasculates human subjectivity, but rather that they established the principle of human subjectivity using absolutely different approaches. Kant adopted a dualistic approach, Hegel a monistic one. It is precisely at this point that Li Zehou is a Hegelian rather than a Kantian. In fact, Li, like most Chinese intellectuals who share a propensity for totalistic philosophies and ideologies, is reasonably estranged from and against the dualism of Kant's philosophy. His practical philosophy of subjectivity is actually monism, namely the monism of practice. Of course, Li is a materialist, and thus his Hegelianism is reversed.

ibid., 233

Such a view, however, is a bit problematic, for it interprets Li's philosophy through the lens of Western categories. It certainly holds true that Li's thought is in sharp contrast with Kant's dualistic system. However, this does not automatically imply that his thought is necessarily monistic, even though it can be deducted to a single entity of human material practice, which represents the central categorical entity in Li's anthropo-historical ontology. On the other hand, however, he also borrows much from his own ideational tradition. Hence, his system is binary structured and includes active and dynamic interactions between the material basis and the ideational superstructure, between reason and emotion, as well as between the subject and the object of cognition, the individual and society, and all other connotations, derived from the basic model of correlative complementarity. Given that monism is by no means the only alternative to dualism, it seems wrong to label Li's thought as a monistic philosophy, just as it would be wrong to denote him as a collectivist only because he rejects exaggerate individualism. Instead, his philosophy is based upon dynamic correlativity and relationalism, both of which belong to the basic specific paradigms of Chinese philosophy.

Li agrees with Hegel's evolutionary understanding of the growth of human freedom, but he rejects Hegel's understanding of how the process evolved (*ibid.*). Similar to numerous other Western philosophers, Hegel placed too

much importance on religion and on the cognitive as well as the political and did not pay enough attention to the aesthetic realm of human subjectivity.³⁵

Some scholars believe that Li Zehou has a distinctive position within pragmatism (e.g., Lynch 2016) and contrast his ethics to the one established by one of its most prominent representatives, John Dewey. Li himself acknowledges that in many respects, Dewey's thought can be compared to an important foundation of his own thought, namely to Confucian ethics, although Marxism comes even closer to it (Li Zehou 2016, 22). He nevertheless points out that Dewey's theories can contribute a lot to a development of a new ethics. Hence, they should be revitalized, linked and combined with Marxism in the framework of a reconstructed Chinese tradition (Li Zehou 2011, 158–159).

Li also points out ways in which his ideas depart from and go beyond those of Dewey, such that Li's own philosophy, he argues, must be seen as distinct from Dewey's pragmatism. If, however, with Cheryl Misak, one understands pragmatism as a broad, still-developing tradition, then Li Zehou can take his place within that tendency and emerge as one of its most creative exponents.

LYNCH 2016, 705

Dewey's pragmatist ethics emphasizes the importance of experiences and practice. In Li's view, these aspects of his theory represent a significant development, complementation and concretization of Marxism. He furthermore validates Dewey's concept of operation, which allowed him to develop his theory further on abstract levels of mathematical logic (Li Zehou 2016, 263). Li nevertheless identifies several flaws in Dewey's theory and criticizes it because it lacks the historical perspective of the long-lasting development of humankind. Hence, Dewey overlooked the importance of the accumulation of human experiences, which plays a significant role in Li's own theory (ibid.).

On the other hand, Dewey's and Li's ethics have several common grounds. Similar to Li, Dewey also opposes the Kantian presumption, according to

35 Under the banner of "Back to Kant," promoted at a Chinese conference held in 1980 for the two-hundredth anniversary of the publication of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, Li even openly suggested an anti-Hegelian slogan, "Yes to Kant and no to Hegel" (Gu Xin 1996, 206). In this regard, Gu Xin comments: "Li, like many other Chinese intellectuals, waved the anti-Hegelian banner, but looming over his entire system of thought is the shadow of the Hegelian grand framework" (ibid.).

which human cognition is rooted in *a priori* forms and concepts. Therefore, they both believe that morality also comes from human experience (Lynch 2016, 707). In addition, similar to Li, Dewey also believes that the basis of human existence is material life. Regarding the evolvement of humankind, he also speaks of the importance of using tools, although in Li's view, he fails to develop such ideas further. As we have seen, the making and using of tools lie at the very center of Li's anthropo-historical ontology. As Catherine Lynch exposes (*ibid.*), this is precisely the idea that permits him to develop a different theory that surpasses Dewey's and other pragmatist's systems of thought.

On the other hand, Dewey and Li are also similar in accepting the presumption that the operational activities of work provide the fundamental contents of human experiences. Symbolic operations abstracted from this basis then obtain an independent character, which can be separated from concrete experiences. In this regard, the two philosophers are also in accord in claiming that logic or mathematics is not something with substance, but merely a method of cognition. Hence, reason as such cannot be hypostatized. But in Li's view, Dewey reduces his theory to these operational aspects, without recognizing that it is precisely this instrumental, operational practice that makes human beings human and allows them to evolve beyond the animal world. "With this narrower focus, everything is an instrument for Dewey. What is useful is what is true, and to know is to do" (*ibid.*, 714).³⁶

Li acknowledges that the concept of usefulness (*youyongxing* 有用性) also belongs to important elements of both the Chinese pragmatic reason as well as the American pragmatism, for both of them apply a similar criterion for judging the truth, which should be "practically useful or functional in the pure sense of this term" (Wang, Keping 2018, 227). In such models, right and effective actions in everyday life are more important than abstract metaphysical theories. However, Li Zehou also emphasizes that "the Chinese pragmatic reason differs from Dewey's pragmatism in that the former stresses and even incorporates a belief in the adaptation to an objective principle or ordination" (*ibid.*). This principle can be found in the Dao of Heaven (*tian dao*), which is—in the holistic Chinese tradition—always intrinsically and dialectically connected with the Dao of human beings (*ren dao*).

36 In this regard, Catherine Lynch suggests that Li might have misunderstood the pragmatic tradition as stopping at Dewey's instrumentalism and laboratory logic, for other pragmatists want to and do account for more than this (Lynch 2016, 715).

In Li's view, Martin Heidegger belongs to the greatest philosophers of the twentieth century.³⁷ But he did not talk about ethics and even neglected it, or at least he did not approve of speaking about ethics because in his view we cannot talk about absolute values. However, Li acknowledges that Heidegger's dismissal of ethics has to be situated in the broader context of his thought as a whole, for he denied the existence of entire philosophy as an academic discipline. Hence, some similarities can still be found in their respective views on the fundamental principles determining the paradigmatic grounds of ethical discourses. As we have seen, Li's notion of the "ontologically fundamental psychology" (*xinli cheng benti* 心理成本體) belongs to the important bases of his ethical system. Some scholars suggest that this notion could be compared to Heidegger's concept of *Dasein*, which similarly implies an ontological quality that fosters the process of human living haunted by care and fear (Jung 2018, 189). Talking about Heidegger's historical ontology, Li affirms that his own concept of psychological substance (*xinli benti* 心理本體) can be linked to Heidegger. Hence, for Li, certain aspects of his philosophy can be compared to the foundational elements of the "culture of pleasure" (*legan wenhua* 樂感文化):

This Being-with-one-another dissolves one's own *Dasein* completely into a kind of Being of 'the Others,' in such a way, indeed, that the Others, as distinguishable and explicit, vanish more and more ... We take pleasure and enjoy ourselves as they take pleasure.

HEIDEGGER 2001, 164

As Heidegger's idea of such a "Being-with-one-another" suggests, Li can also be compared with Heidegger regarding the elementary presumption of his own ethics (and also, of his general theory), which proceeds from the fact that human beings are alive (*ren huozhe* 人活著). Li considered this presumption to be crucial because it expresses an established fact and not a decision or a choice that could be made by an individual. It is also important that "being alive" involves coexisting with others, or, in Heidegger's words, "the world is always the one that I share with Others." (*ibid.*, 155).

37 In his more mature years, however, he started to dislike the entire philosophy of this German theoretician—and the same applied to Marx. In one of his most recent interviews (Li Zehou and Liu Yuedi 2018), he has namely explicitly stated: I said that I increasingly dislike Heidegger. And it is the same with Marx (我說過我是越來越不喜歡 Heidegger。對 Marx 也如此) (*ibid.*, 20).

Another meeting point between Heidegger and Li Zehou can be found in their common endeavor to break through the limitations of language through ethics (Li, Zehou 2018, 27). In this context, Li highlights that this is one of the main reasons why he has established the concepts of “emotio-rational structure” and “emotion-based substance.” But Li reproaches Heidegger, on the other hand, with an incorrect interpretation of Kant’s “unknown common origin of sensitivity and cognition.” While Heidegger sees this origin in the “transcendental imagination,” Li believes it is a result of the material practice of making and using tools (Li Zehou and Liu Xuyuan 2011, 77). Heidegger’s neglect of the importance of the material aspects of human life and his anti-rational stance can already be overturned by Kant’s understanding of the capacities of humanness, and even more by Marx’s historical materialism, but also by the specific sense of history derived from the Chinese tradition, which can be used as a first step in proposing a new theory of humanness. On the other hand, Li exposes that even though Heidegger’s anti-rationalism is emotional, it still relies on standard rational manifestations to express this anti-rationalism. It is for this reason that Heidegger, not Plato or Kant, is the most appropriate Western reference for discussing Chinese culture and emotions as substance (Li Zehou 2016b, 82).

In this context, he refers to the similarity between some Chan-Buddhist metaphysics and Heidegger’s philosophy.

In the transcendental amalgamation of Buddha and my own self, all these binary pairs (such as presence-absence, occurrence-emptiness, hollowness-fullness, life-death, sadness-joy, love-hate, good-evil, right-wrong, glory-decline, poverty-richness, valuable-unworthy, and so on) are not mutually differentiated. And this is precisely the meaning of Being.

在我即佛佛即我的真正超越裡，這一切（有無、色空、虛實、生死、憂喜、愛憎、善惡、是非、榮枯、貧富、貴賤 等等）渾然失去區分，而這也就是那個不可言說的“存在”。

LI ZEHOU 2016, 236

He highlights that Heidegger himself has exposed the most important influence of Suzuki’s work upon his thought (ibid.), although he believes this position to be in exaggeration, because the ancient ideational patterns of motionless tranquility implied in the Chan Buddhist thought cannot be compared to the active, modern form of Heidegger’s philosophy (ibid.).

But in this context, Li Zehou also emphasizes that Heidegger’s notions of condition, feeling, and *Dasein* are still rational, abstract, and universal, whereas

his own theory is concrete, particular, and actual. In his view, all such notions are, in fact, a living part of concrete human reality, just as the Being itself:

I think that in this respect, history can be assimilated into metaphysics. Such a metaphysical realm is posited in the physical one, in reality. This is the real question of Being, which primarily belongs to the humankind, and is then further expanded to the entire universe.

我以為用在這裡，可將歷史引入形而上學。這形上恰恰就在形下中，在現實中。這才是真實的 Being 問題，這 Being 首先是人類的，擴而涉及宇宙。

LI ZEHOU 2016b, 226

After Heidegger's notion of "being-towards-death" and "angst" people still need to live. It is important to see that human beings live in concrete social relations and circumstances. Hence, for Li, Heidegger's attempts to strip away this concrete and actual existence in order to pursue an illusory nothingness is somewhat ridiculous, and he compares it to the attempt to catch a fish by climbing a tree (*ibid.*, 86). Besides, the atheism such as Nietzsche's and Heidegger's has led to nihilism, prevailing in the present societies, although this is also a necessary outcome of the Enlightenment's exaggerated praise of individualism and rationality.

Although in principle, Li acknowledges the progressive historical role of the theories of social contract, he is still skeptical toward its basic model, which is grounded in a purely formal relation between independent isolated individuals and a mechanistically structured society. For Li, human life is always concrete and it necessarily contains coexistence with others. Accordingly, the context of relations cannot be simply understood as being rooted in a social contract that would presuppose relations as an outcome of will or inclination. In this respect, Li's theory also differs from most Neo-Marxist, e.g., from Jean-Paul Sartre's, who proposed that "existence precedes essence," which means that human beings are highly individualized subjects, external to interpersonal relations. According to Li, such relations essentially represent a "social existence" in the classical Marxist sense and cannot be seen as a result of choice (Banka 2018, 360). He basically also disagrees with the proponents of Western Marxism in several other aspects:

Sartre's existentialism, the philosophies of the Frankfurt School, and other fashionable currents (like the philosophy of rebellion or the philosophy of emotion), on the other hand, are blindly propagating the

individual subjectiveness. They have nothing to do with the practical philosophy of subjectality.

沙特的存在主義，法蘭克福學派等，則可說是盲目誇張個體主體性的熱哲學（造反哲學、情緒哲學），它們都應為主體性實踐哲學所揚棄掉。

LI ZEHOU 1985, 21

But the main common flaw of most “fashionable” contemporary streams of thought emerging in the Euro-American region throughout the twentieth century—apart from their overemphasis on the individually conditioned type of subjectivity—is also their negation of humanness as a comprehensive entity including not only reason, but also emotions:

Analytical philosophy, structuralism, and many other streams of the contemporary capitalist world (for instance, philosophical methodology or epistemology) are cold philosophies, which overlook the substance of subjectality.

目前資本主義世界中的分析哲學結構主義等等，可說是無視主體性本體的冷哲學（方法哲學、知性哲學）。

ibid.

A common aspect of Li's ethical thought and numerous proponents of the Critical theory could be found in the fact that they all equally aimed to reformulate Kant's ethics—although each of them in their distinctive way. As we have already mentioned in previous chapters,³⁸ Habermas tried to upgrade Kant's moral philosophy by integrating moral norms in what he called “discourse ethics,” a dynamic framework of intersubjective communication (Habermas 1989, 38). Li harshly criticized this notion. First of all, he exposed that it was grounded in an unclear and not well-founded differentiation between ethics and morality, which differed completely from the one pursued by himself.³⁹ Second, he reproached Habermas with an exaggerated emphasis on individual biographical contexts, which has—in Li's view—led the contemporary theoretician to neglect the importance of material practice on the one hand, and of the universal factors of ethics and morality on the other. In other words, Li thinks that Habermas overlooked the significance of the fact that social existence endows

38 Particularly in the section on Li Zehou's differentiation between ethics and morality.

39 For a more detailed explanation of these differences, see “Li Zehou's distinction” in the present book, Chapter 4.

interpersonal communications with a sturdy material basis, which decidedly influences the ethical conditions in all human societies.

Nevertheless, we might add in this respect that Habermas's concept of ethical discourses is still built upon the notion of historicity implied in the Hegelian and Marxist traditions. Namely, for Habermas, this historicity functions upon two levels: on the first, the discourse ethics came into life as a part of complex real-world processes, involving changes in interpersonal relations, social institutions, and material conditions. Only the second developmental level is linked to the individual "life history," i.e., into individual biographical contexts (Anderson 2014, 95). Although Li has criticized the entire discourse of the Critical theory (including Habermas who belongs to the second generation of the Frankfurt School) for their overstress on individuality, this might not entirely apply to Habermas, for he views all individual processes as deeply dependent on supportive social conditions (*ibid.*). Hence, Li's reproach that Habermas only talks about negotiations and rational discussions without considering the influence of the material basis (Li Zehou and Tong Shijun 2012: 169) might be a bit exaggerated. Habermas has repeatedly criticized the proponents of the first generation of the Frankfurt school, notably Horkheimer and Adorno, for their transformation of original Marxist, historical-materialist assumptions into "pseudonormative propositions concerning an objective teleology in history" (Habermas 1985, 382).

Among contemporary liberal theoreticians, Li endorses John Rawls, who offered an alternative to utilitarianism with his systematic theory of what one ought to do. Rawls's approach has led to conclusions about justice that were very different from those of the utilitarians. In Li's view, Rawls's "difference principle," which belongs to the crucial ideas of his famous book *A Theory of Justice*, has unwittingly been implemented in China during the last decades. Deng Xiaoping's policy of economic liberalization was namely grounded on the idea to allow some parts of the population to get rich first with the purpose that, after a certain time, even those in the remote and backward rural areas could also benefit.

If we say that free trade and fair exchange throughout society under a market economy of large industrial production can be seen as the first principle from *A Theory of Justice* as well as the basis of liberalism in general, then China's Reform and Opening can be seen as an actual example of the difference principle of Rawls's second principle. This more or less resolves theoretical issues of general benefit despite a lack of economic equality.

He emphasizes, however, that the application of such principles is only the first step in establishing a society of fairer and more sensible distributive justice and shared prosperity. In his view, the next step requires a new theory, which could be created by placing Rawls upon a Marxist foundation. Such an approach could open new possibilities and is also completely realistic, for Rawls's theory is already grounded on the conditions of modern economic life. In this context, Li regrets the fact that "there have been thousands of essays on Rawls, but almost no one has emphasized this point" (ibid.). The establishment of just, equal, and free political structures, based upon a Marxist understanding of Rawls's principles, would require a broad and extraordinarily complex theoretical debate.

Li also endorses Rawls's notion of "overlapping consensus," which refers to how supporters of various ample normative guidelines—that include seemingly incompatible ideas of justice—can come to an agreement on certain concrete principles of justice that warrant a stable political foundation of social institutions in different societies. He sees it as an important concept that allows a separation of individual rights from the austere fights over different understandings of "good." In the course of global economic integration, public reason, individual autonomy and equal human rights will carry on to spread, and to pursue "overlapping consensus" as a standard of modern political life that can be accepted and implemented by adherents of various traditions, cultures and religions. However, Li highlights that Rawls does not explain how "overlapping consensus" is possible in concrete societies. In Li's own view, it is possible because in every society, human beings share a common, material ontological foundation, or in Li's own words, "because people have in common that they live within the modern economic order" (Li, Zehou 2016, 1133). In contrast to Rawls's "overlapping consensus," Li's historical ontology takes modern market economy and today's globalized "unified" markets as the actual basis.

On the other hand, Li agrees with Rawls in his presumption that rights have to be separated from axiological notions of good and evil, because in his own ethics, Li also lays stress on the priority of right over good and on a strict separation of religious from social moralities in order to avoid the clash of tradition and modernization.

Li is also interested in Rawls's "sense of justice," especially since it has often been compared to seemingly related concepts in Confucian thought.⁴⁰ In his view, however, there are major differences between the two discourses. Rawls's

40 Here, Li mentions Erin Cline's book, *Confucius, Rawls and the Sense of Justice*.

notion of the sense of justice is rooted in the original position of free and equal citizens in a well-ordered society who may well be morally motivated by their sense of justice to do what is right and just for its own sake. In Li's view, such a sense of social justice is too vague and abstract, since it is established on purely rational foundations. Rawls's conception of emotion, which is a necessary part of his sense of justice, is also too indistinct. In contrast, Chinese or Confucian traditions are rooted in different, highly socialized, and cultivated human emotions that continuously appear within various particular social relationships. Such relationships are based upon structural inequality, but simultaneously on a ratio-emotional ethical order defined by mutual responsibilities, which can warrant social harmony without relying on overall conceptions of independent, free and equal individuals. This differs profoundly from the ancient Greek conceptualization of virtue ethics that is grounded in the idea of an autonomous, equal, and even homogeneous individuals; correspondingly, it cannot be compared to Rawls's concept of the sense of justice. Because of similar reasons, Li also criticizes Rawls's notion of the "veil of ignorance," because in the real world, there is no such thing as an entirely independent, pure self, stripped of all objectives and relationships (Li, Zehou 2016, 1117). He concludes that because the veil of ignorance theory overlooks actual particulars and emotional responses, Rawls fails to consider the entirety of the concrete situations. Therefore, this concept cannot be used exclusively, but only as a regulatory guideline (D'Ambrosio 2016, 726).

But overall, certain aspects of contemporary liberalism such as those of Rawls's ideas of "the difference principle," "overlapping consensus," and "the priority of the right over the good" are precisely what China needs today:

Western societies have differentiated between politics and religion for a long time. To do so [in China, where] religion, politics, and ethics are intermingled, is not only necessary, but also quite difficult. Here I very much like to use John Rawls's notion of "overlapping consensus" that can be found in his book, *Political Liberalism*, as a support to explain the distinctions between right and wrong, good and evil, and between political philosophy and ethical theories.

西方政教分離且歷史悠久，使今天區分“宗教，政治，倫理三合一”不僅必要，而且很難。這裡，我非常喜歡引用 J. Rawls 的“政治自由主義”一書中的“重疊共識”(overlapping consensus) 理論作為支撐，將“對錯”與“善惡”，將政治哲學與倫理學分別開來。

In this context, however, Li Zehou also warns of exaggeratedly rational economic and political mechanisms contained in these theories. In his view, China should apply the emotion-based substance and relationalism (*guanxizhuyi*) of its own tradition and apply it as the “regulative and properly constitutive” principle to overcome the mechanistic nature of these immensely rational discourses.

Li sees Rawls as posited in the leftist tradition of liberalism. For him, the main representative of the rightist liberal theoreticians is Friedrich Hayek, even though this famous social theorist and political philosopher does not regard himself to be a libertarian. Hayek, who has been very influential in modern China, advocates spontaneous ordering of societies and free competition instead of rational constructs such as policies of state welfare. However, while Rawls certainly elaborates on some important elements of Kant’s tradition (e.g., on Kant’s principle of helping others), Li is skeptical of whether Hayek could also fit into this tradition, even though he could be seen as upgrading Kant’s principle of developing oneself. Besides, Li does not agree with Hayek’s presumption that individual freedom is not something humans have created, but rather a part of the evolution of tradition, in which it has been gradually formed. In contrast to such a view, Li’s ethics is founded upon the notion of active human subjectality. Furthermore, Hayek’s empiricism does not explain clearly that the tradition he talks about is actually a modern one—one that was developed in the last couple hundred years. Hence, such a concept of freedom cannot be generalized as something that human societies have always possessed. Before capitalist societies, there was no such thing as a tradition of individual freedom. So Li views Hayek’s “universality” of freedom as an abstract notion that relies on a purely theoretical and ahistorical hypothesis (Li Zehou 2016b, 43).

As we have seen, Li also elaborated on the numerous communitarian critiques of liberalism. However, the present section does not include his views on the issue because they have already been exhaustively discussed in the section that deals with Li’s interpretation of Sandel’s communitarian ethics.⁴¹

Li commented on many other tendencies in contemporary world ethics, especially on those that have often been compared with the Chinese tradition. Such an ethical discourse, for instance, is the feminist care ethics. In some aspects, Li’s view on the idea of the social contract is similar to the contemporary feminist critique, which argues that understanding interpersonal relations solely in terms of contracts pertains only to a narrow scope of human ends (e.g.,

41 See the section “Communitarianism and the response to Sandel” in Chapter 6.

Held 2006, 81). The main mistake of such ideas is that they are unable to reflect upon or to represent the multifariousness and richness of human psychology. In this light, the feminist care ethics proposes alternative models of interpersonal relationships while simultaneously searching for new insights into the very nature of morality. The search for such new ethical systems that concentrated on gender equality in moral development began with Carol Gilligan's book *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (1982), which was often described as a starter of a (gender) revolution. Many proponents of the feminist care ethics, e.g., Sara Ruddick and Virginia Held, suggest the model of the mother-child relationship as a substitute for the liberal paradigm, which is characterized by individual agents guided by self-interest negotiating with each other through normative contracts. In their view, the mother and child model is more realistic and suitable, because it allows people—and particularly women—to live their relationships in a more authentic way, namely, in and through genuine moral experiences (Rošker 2019, 241–242). Similar to numerous feminist critics, Li does not entirely support this approach, for in a certain sense, it propagates the values of premodern times. Hence, it can lead to a reoccurrence of such values and is therefore, in essence, conservative. In his view, this line of present-day feminist theory belongs to postmodern discourses, which are essentially anti-rationalist and question the important, arduously achieved Enlightenment ideals.⁴² He highlights that he is definitely against any kind of retro-sentimental ethics, which relies on sympathy or empathy (Li Zehou 2016b, 173). In this regard, feminist care theories cannot be compared to Confucian ethics.

According to Li, numerous flaws that can be found in the works of modern moral and ethical philosophers, including the works of Mill, Kant, Rawls, and Sandel, are due to a failure to recognize the distinction between the two categories of moralities that he established in his own theory. As we have already seen, Li believes that the theory of the two kinds of morality (*liang de lun*) belongs to his most important contributions to contemporary ethics (D'Ambrosio 2016, 723–724). Besides, he thinks that his concepts of modern social morality and of the priority of the right over the good are not directly established on Hobbes, Rousseau, Kant, and Rawls's theories of the atomic individual, social contracts, the veil of ignorance, and other liberal hypotheses,

42 This applies, however, to the general principles of the feminist care ethics discourse as a whole; Li explicitly states that some of its main representatives, as for instance Carol Gilligan herself, and the male feminist philosopher Michel Slote, do not entirely reject the importance of reason (Li Zehou 2016b, 173).

but rather on the basis of actual circumstances determining modern capitalist societies and economies. But even though these theoreticians of modern ethics did not establish an explicit concept comparable to his own distinction between the two kinds of moralities, many aspects of their theories⁴³ can still be explained through the lens of such a differentiation.

43 As an example, Li states: "I think that Rawls's theory fits well with my distinction between two types of morality" (我以為 J. Rawls 這一理論適合於我的兩種道德的區分) (Li Zehou 2016b, 48).

Theoretical and Methodological Innovations

Li Zehou's ethics cannot be understood without considering his basic distinction between ethics and morality. Even though in Chinese and Western theory, the demarcation line between the two notions is often blurred, and although they are being defined in many different ways, Li's differentiation must necessarily be taken into account if we want to grasp the entire meaning and the inherent coherence of his ethical thought, which forms a coherent and intelligible theoretical system. Similar to the traditional connotations implied in the Chinese notions (*lunli* 倫理 and *daode* 道德, respectively), ethics refers here to the external social norms or standards, which includes customs, rules, and legal regulations, whereas morality denotes internal psychological formations. While the former is mainly a subject of political philosophy, the latter leads to moral psychology.

Li's understanding of morality as an internal formation determining human beings differs profoundly from the notion assumed by most Western moral philosophies standing in the Kantian tradition. In Li's view, this formation is embedded into a dynamic emotio-rational structure (*qingli jiegou* 情理結構), in which reason and emotions do not exclude each other but are intertwined. Hence, they both influence moral decisions. In this sense, Li's philosophy differs radically from most of the systems that have prevailed in the history of Western thought and mostly strictly separates the empirical sphere from the rational one. In this context, he highlights that even though certain combinations of reason and emotions are also treated in various Western discourses, such views are by far not as influential in the Western culture as they are in the Chinese.

Certainly, various Western discourses have also elaborated on feelings and on the relation between reason and emotions with respect to life, system, and theory. The only thing I want to expose is the following: in regard to the focus of attention, theoretical concern and philosophical construction, their role was not as explicit and important as it is in China.

當然, 西方在生活, 制度, 理論上也講情感和情理關係, 這裡只是說, 從意識重點, 理論關切, 哲學構造看, 不像中國這麼突出和重視。

LI ZEHOU 2017, 25

On the other hand, it is important to note that in this structure, human will as a form, belonging to reason, is the primary and decisive power, whereas emotions play a secondary and an auxiliary role. In this rough sense, we could say that Li Zehou differs from both Kant and Hume (or rationalism and empiricism or sensualism, respectively). However, due to the important role of human will, freedom, and the categorical imperative in Li's system, he often emphasizes that he is more of a Kantian than a Humean philosopher.

Li's meta-ethical position regarding moral values is semi-relativist in the sense that their contents (ideas, beliefs, and moral emotions) are changeable, although they are simultaneously always defined by the ultimate criterion and the categorical foundation of human ethics, namely, the sustainable existence and reproduction of humankind. Therefore, he strongly opposes relativist ethics. He regards postmodern discourses as problematic or even dangerous, particularly with respect to societies that find themselves on the difficult edge between tradition and modernity. The firm grounds of human reason must not be questioned again, and humankind should not slip back into the irrational mysteries that determined the world before the Enlightenment. Although this might change somewhere in the distant future, for now we need to respect, maintain, and defend the values of freedom, autonomy, and individual human rights—and to combine them with other values that can be just as important for our globalized world. Precisely because of its inherent humanism, but also due to its interpersonal and intersubjective nature, Li often highlights the contemporary value implied in the traditional Chinese virtue of humaneness (*ren*).

In Li's view, the laws determining the coherent development of humankind as a whole influence and indirectly control the basic, general guidelines of human moral conduct. This view also plays an important role in his emphasis on the unity of facts and values. As we have seen, Li exposes that values are not transcendent but a basic precondition of human existence. In his schema, the core value of goodness is not defined by its opposition to the concept of evil but is rather seen as the ultimate standard conditioning and determining the ontology of humanness (*ren xing*). This ultimate criterion is linked to the aforementioned sustainable preservation and development of the humankind through its continuous vital practices. In this schema, the possibility of an amalgamation of facts and values arises from the conditions determining the concrete human world. Even though the "*is*" is primary, human beings would not be able to survive in the factual world without incorporating the "*ought*"; in other words, human beings as such can only exist by living and acting in accordance with values. Analogously, it is human beings, who—due to their existential needs and to their ability of surpassing the mechanistic laws of history—necessarily endows the emotionless nature of the universe with feelings and meaning.

The “absence of emotion” is the original stance of the universe, but the only actual reality of human life lies in its “emotionality.”

“無情”是宇宙的本相，但“有情”才是真實的，現實的人生。

LI ZEHOU 2016b, 224

Li's linkage between facts and values is not implemented into a formally logical model of causal inference. In this schema, one still cannot simply infer from facts to values. Facts necessarily precede values, just as the emotionless universe precedes human emotional responsiveness. But on the other hand, facts and values also form a binary correlative formation of mutual interaction. Even though in a strictly theoretical sense, facts can be distinguished from values and even precondition them, values are a vital and essential part of human existence. They are not only one-dimensionally influenced by facts but also have a retroactive effect upon them. This is the reason why values, as we all know, endow facts with meaning and purpose. In Li's view, both are embedded into a dynamic continuous interaction of human being and becoming. Their reciprocal relation is one between unity and particularity, for while the variety of different beings belongs to the realm of particular facts, their unity is rooted in the one (and only) world that includes both values and facts.

There are some apparent similarities between Li's view on the relation between the universe and human values on the one side, and the prevailing modern Chinese metaphysical theories on the other. However, there is still an important split between the two. While in the Modern New Confucian understanding, for instance, values are still positioned into the transcendent metaphysical realm, Li views them as a historical necessity through which history is entering the metaphysics (ibid., 226). According to him, such metaphysics is positioned in the physical sphere of concrete reality. Li's view on the relation between “emotionless” facts and “emotionally permeated” values also differs from most other contemporary Chinese theoretical approaches to this problem, particularly, as we have seen, from Chen Lai's notion of the ontology of humaneness (*ren*), for Li's emotion-based substance has wider and more fundamental implications than Chen's notion of humaneness as the substantial root of the universe.

It is demanding (and probably redundant) to try to squeeze Li's ethics into one of the clearly determinable types that were shaped in the history of Western ethics. The overall approach which defines his system can—at least at first glimpse—be seen as belonging to the theories of evolutionary ethics, since for him, the “sustainable preservation of the existence of humankind as a whole” (*renlei zongtǐde shengcun yanxu* 人類總體的生存延續) is the basic

origin and the chief imperative criterion of human morality. The evolutionary foundations of his ethical thought are visible in his central approach to morality, which is rooted in his emphasis on the important role of human material development (i.e., a development based on the manufacturing and using of tools) in the forming of human psychology. Yet, in spite of his persistence on such strictly materialist dialectical development of human evolution, he simultaneously upholds and highlights the idea of the significant roles played by human subjectality, and the coincidental factors of history in this process.

Therefore, Li never explicitly endorses classical Darwinian evolutionary presumptions such as natural selection or the survival of the fittest. He criticizes Darwin's mechanistic view of history and reproaches it for its neglect of the important role of the human subject and subjectality in historical processes. Li also questions his explanation of the origin of human morality, by which Darwin aimed to show that there was no absolute gap between man and animals. Hence, Li does not agree with his presumption that an advanced moral sense could have evolved through a natural evolutionary process guided by social instincts (Darwin 2018, 98) that were allegedly grounded in our nature as "social animals" (*ibid.*, 44).

Darwin did not take into account that human beings are more than just animals evolved by natural evolution. He overlooked the fact that at the same time, they are also producing and using tools, which allowed for the creation of reason and of social animals. Because of this reason, many of his hypotheses ... are falsified by history, which evolved over several millions of years. If we only take a look at some of his crucial notions such as "intelligence" or "good development," we can see that they are blur and ambiguous. Besides, the natural evolution of numerous primates have already lasted several millions of years, and yet, none of them has invented airplanes or mobile phones. They have neither developed ethical relations, freedom or equality, individual human rights, and so on.¹

1 Actually, in spite of its originality, this critique of Darwin seems to reopen numerous additional questions. In Li's theory, there is no clearly defined dividing line between humans and animals. The later also make and use certain primitive kinds of tools, and the most complex developed ones even communicate through certain embryonic forms of linguistic modules. According to Li Zehou, this difference arises because humans—through their engagement in practice—possess subjectality, which arises, again, through the making and using of tools. Even though the process of humanization manifests itself in the creation of "supra-biological beings" and in various social, ritual and linguistic scopes, one might still wonder whether this is enough to detach humans from other animals.

達爾文沒有註意或重視人類不只是自然進化的動物，而同時更是製造、使用工具，從而產生理性和社會的動物。因之，達爾文的許多論斷 ... 數百萬年的歷史證明並非如此，僅所謂“智力”“良好的發展”等詞語，非常含混模糊，而且許多靈長類動物自然進化也已數百萬年，但至今不能造出飛機和手機，也沒有什麼父慈子孝、兄友弟恭，自由平等、個體人權，等等。

LI ZEHOU 2016C, 7

We could at the most suggest that Li's system is close to—but not completely congruent with—the ones belonging to the classical theories of evolutionary ethics, although the very process of human evolution plays a crucial role in his entire philosophical system.

In our attempt to classify Li's thought in accordance with the main categories of Western theories of ethics or moral philosophy, we will always end up with identifying certain similarities with particular disciplines included in the globally prevailing ethics. But at the same time, we will necessarily detect a basic incongruence between Li's thought and any of these systems. On the one hand, this incongruence is (at least partly) a result of differences in referential frameworks, for Li's ethics is based upon a dynamic processual methodology of the holistic one-world view, while most of the foundational approaches applied by prevailing (i.e., “Western”) ethical theories are grounded on static suppositions and dualistic approaches. On the other hand, Li's theory considers many elements derived from essentially different systems of thought, namely the ones developed in the Chinese, especially Confucian tradition.

However, as already mentioned, Li's ethics cannot be seen as a mere combination of these diverse approaches. It is innovative and unique because it surpasses the conventional disciplinary and methodological boundaries, aiming to shape a new view on human morality, and to create possibilities of a new, global ethics that could guarantee the further development of humanness in our common world.

His theory certainly does not belong in the category of virtue ethics, even though he recommends certain elements of approaches that can be found in the Chinese ideational tradition. On the other hand, nor can it be denoted as a consequentialist system, although Li also strongly supports certain elements of utilitarianism.

At a first glance, Li's ethics seems to roughly follow the lines of deontological schemes. His deontological views manifest themselves, for instance, in his emphasis on the urgent necessity to become aware of our basic human mission. As human beings, we are necessarily a part of the natural and—even more importantly—social environment, which allows for, enables, and creates

our very existence. Hence, we all are inevitably obliged to the society in which we live, and we have to fulfill our duties toward the social network of which we are a part without further ado.

As soon as an individual is born, they received the following “obligation”: without being able to choose, you were born into a long river of human history (into a situation and an environment, which provides you with all basic necessities for your life). The civilization and the culture that are legacies of this “entirety of humankind” will nurture you and raise you, and therefore you are indebted to them. At all times you have to be completely committed to them, even to sacrifice yourself, if necessary. There are no other special reasons for this: one must absolutely follow and obey this “categorical imperative” and this “practical reason.”

個體一出生，即有此道德「義務」：你出生在一個沒法選擇的人類總體的歷史長河（衣食住行的既定狀況和環境）之中，是這個「人類總體」所遺留下來的文明，文化將你撫養成人，從而你就欠債，就得準備隨時獻身為它，包括犧牲自己。這就是沒有什麼道理可說，只有絕對服從堅決執行的「絕對律令」和「實踐理性」的來由。

LI ZEHOU 2016, 315

This shows that in Li's system, the categorical imperative is—similar to Kant's—a kind of universal necessity.² In contrast to Kant, however, he offers an explanation of the basic origin, in which this imperative is rooted. In Li's view, it arises from the elementary requirements for a sustainable existence and continuous reproduction of the humankind. In this light, he also sees the genuine significance of Kant's maxim “duty of assisting others.” On this ground, Li explains the difference between liberal attitudes to the fundamental driving force of ethical behavior and his own.

“To assist other people” is different from the right-wing liberalist philanthropy or charity. From the viewpoint of anthropology, it is a duty, arising from our life in community. This can involve deep emotions, which can be helpful for achieving social harmony.

² Here, Li's specific, historical understanding of the term universal necessity, which is tightly linked to the notion of objective sociality, must be taken into account.

“幫助他人”不像右派自由主義所說的是慈善事業，是施捨。從人類學角度看，它是生活在共同體中的義務。其中可滲入深厚情感，有助社會和諧。

LI ZEHOU 2013, 7

In a similar manner, he also criticized the concept of equality, which lies in the center of liberal ethics. In this context, he also questions the concepts of (moral) duty underlying such approaches. In his view, the liberal concept of duty is—similar to the notion of equality—simply too abstract, and therefore unrealistic.

Such problems cannot be solved by some kind of abstract ideas of justice or moral duty. Our great world was always a unity of manifold differences and inequalities.

不能用某種抽象的正義觀念、道德義務來對待這些問題，大千世界本就是一個千差萬別而並不平等的多樣性的組合體。

LI ZEHOU 2013, 5

Despite some superficial similarities, Li's "deontology" is profoundly different from the liberalist one. He criticizes the liberal approaches for their exaggerated emphasis on the individual and because they overlook the importance of social and communal concerns that are rooted in the collective nature of humanness.³ But while he thoroughly negates the mechanistic approaches that were grounded upon the liberalist idea of (formally) equal individuals, Li still endorses Kant's idea of the universally valid categorical imperative, albeit he places it into a dynamic and changeable context of continuous human practice.

As we have seen above, Li's notion of duty is hence not a purely rational or static concept. It is more than a pure form, for it comprises concrete contents of will and emotions, even though in the process of moral decisions, the latter is merely viewed as an auxiliary force. However, in certain phases of human social development, duty necessarily achieves a normative character. In modern societies, duties must be universalized in the form of legal regulations, which have to be constituted in the framework of modern social morality.

Yet, in Li's system, this universality is not one of a rigid or absolute nature. Legal regulations are always necessarily subjected to complex and dynamic

3 This is also an important aspect of Li's critique of the Critical theory and the post- or neo-Marxist streams of thought.

contexts of the multifarious situations brought about by the concrete life of individuals who live in certain social reality. Hence, the implementation of such regulations needs to be continuously supported and reinforced by criteria, rooted in and influenced by the particular conditions of the concrete life. In other words, legal norms as an important and predominant part of modern social morality have to be supported by values, beliefs, emotions, and ideas belonging to the traditional religious morality, albeit the latter must remain limited to the offering of “regulative and properly constitutive” principles or standards. In such a view, the concepts of general necessity and particular circumstances are being placed into a model of mutual interactivity, defined by the social, and supplemented by the religious morality.

Li admits that it is not always easy to find a proper way of interaction and mutual influence of these two kinds of morality. The concrete answers to the question of how, when, and to what degree the values belonging to a certain kind of religious morality can influence the prevailing social morality and thereby define the specific implementation of policies and regulations requires a wise politics. This would operate in accordance with *du*, the dynamic “proper measure” that can guarantee the most balanced (and hence most just and most effective) execution of concrete legal decisions.

Besides, Li’s theory of the two kinds of morality can also be seen as an innovative model of maintaining the paradigm of the priority of right over good, which is again a typical presumption of most contemporary deontological ethics (Hübner 2018, 205). This presumption, which is also repeatedly assumed and emphasized by Li, can be interpreted in many different ways. However, according to Dietmar Hübner (*ibid.*), it can always serve as a milestone that separates the advocates of deontology from those theoreticians who follow the suppositions of virtue and teleological ethics respectively.

Irrespective of these difficulties arising from our (hitherto fruitless) attempts to place Li’s ethical system into the frameworks of the prevailing discourses, we can try to take a peek into the methodological bases of his ethical philosophy. Proceeding from this elementary angle, we might become able to identify some exiting and attention-grabbing elements of his thought.

The main features of Li’s methodology can—inter alia—be found in his *Overview Scheme of Ethics* (see appendix). As we have seen, it is based upon a development that is outlined by four arrows, leading from collective human condition or shared emotionality through (à) rituality (àß) and reason to (à) individual emotions. These arrows not only define a simple causal or chronological development of the four segments, but also point to their relations, which are by no means one-dimensional. To a certain extent, they can also mutually influence one another. This mutuality is clearly visible in the relation

between the segments of rituality and reason. Similar to the fact that the situationally determined collective human circumstance and people's collective emotionality precondition the constitution of rituality, reason determines the forming and functioning of individual emotions, which represent the final segment of the basic scheme. At first glance, the first and the fourth arrow are (in contrast to the second and the third one, which present reciprocity) one-dimensional, but their basic qualities are still different. While the first arrow is guided by the laws of historical development, the fourth one is based upon a mutually interactive relation between reason and emotion, in which the former controls and guides the latter.

But in addition to its inseparability from emotion, Li's notion of reason differs in many further aspects from the ones defined by the Euro-American philosophical traditions. His "pragmatic reason" is more than just a practical version of the pure, i.e., strictly formal reason. In Li's system, reason consists of elements that are relatively static (the form of human will) and the dynamically changing (the contents of ideas, concepts and believes). Together with emotions, these two elements imply the basic foundations of human inward morality, while the external level of morality, i.e., the morality of human interactions in the public agendas, is outlined through the important aforementioned distinction between the modern social and the traditional religious morality.

A basic feature that defines Li Zehou's notion of "pragmatic reason" is a rational spirit or attitude, such as the one which prevailed in the Chinese tradition. In Li's view, such an attitude is essentially oriented toward the fulfillment of the requirements of the material grounds of human existence. Such reason cannot be purely transcendental, for it never departs from human history and experiences. However, in spite (or precisely because) of its being rooted in the material practice, it also determines our modes of perception and shapes particular thought patterns and laws of reasoning. It has ethical and epistemological proportions. Since it is rooted in material practice, which is the basic and defining element of human existence, it also possesses an ontological dimension of physicality, although, as implied by Li's notion of emotion-based substance, the ultimate substantial root of human existence is based upon emotionality and situational responsiveness. Hence, in Li's system, reason does not occupy the sole and highest position in determining moral decisions and conducts. Its dynamic (albeit authoritative) interrelation with situationally defined emotional (or sensitive) responsiveness allows it to not only preserve, but also develop humanness, for it still belongs to the deepest and most foundational features of that which makes us human. Precisely due to such flexible and dynamic nature, the form of pragmatic reason offers people the possibility to adapt to the development of history and to regulate their

conduct in accordance with specific conditions of their respective natural and social environments and, simultaneously, to remain open for changes and for the learning from new situations. Such a notion of reason can doubtless be considered as a unique contribution to the establishment of modern Chinese, and possibly also to the shaping of a modern global ethics. In this context, Li also believes that his theory of emotio-rational formation, in which the pragmatic reason is firmly embedded, could serve as a possible inspiration for the construction of new moralities.

With his emphasis and his elaboration on the notion of emotion-based substance, which presents a basic characteristic of the Chinese tradition, Li highlights his presumption that emotions are essential elements of human consciousness; therefore, they belong to the elementary features defining the actual human existence. Since all human experience is based on sensual perception, ethical norms evolve not only in accord with rational presumptions, but also in concurrence with emotion-based factors. Even though Li shaped his notion of the emotion-based substance on the grounds of the Chinese philosophical tradition, he believes that it can be important for all contemporary societies: it can help us surpass the limits of instrumental rationality without relying on mystification or exaggerated relativization of reality. Emotions are also instrumental in our views on and attitudes in interpersonal and communal relationships; in Li's view these are by no means limited to rational practices or normative orders of social systems.

In Li's model of social ethics, the individual does not occupy a central position. It is not a basic concept defining the structure of society. On the other hand, Li's schema of social order is not a construction of mechanistic collectivism. The basic design of the relation between the individual and the social groups, on which Li's ethical system is grounded, is based on a structural network of relationalism (*guanxizhuyi* 關係主義), which can be found in traditional Chinese models of social life. In this framework, people are constituted by the social relations that they live because they cannot be abstracted from their vital connections to other fellow humans. In reference to Henry Rosemont and Roger Ames (see Rosemont 1991; 2015; Ames 2011, Rosemont and Ames 2016) I denote these relations as "social roles," even though Li himself denies the necessity of replacing the term "virtue ethics" with the neologism "role ethics" in, the Chinese tradition.

Role ethics is just a virtue ethics, it is all about relations! Relations are always pertaining to a virtue ethics. But this kind of virtue ethics differs from the Aristotelian one. However, as soon as they think about virtue

ethics, they always automatically presuppose the Aristotelian version; China, however, can also possess its own virtue ethics!

角色倫理也是美德倫理，就是關係嘛！關係當然也就是美德倫理。但它與亞里士多德的美德倫理不一樣，他們想起美德倫理就是亞里士多德那個，中國也可以有它的美德嘛。

LI ZEHOU AND LIU YUEDI 2014b, 21

This basic observation, which is certainly well grounded, does not directly pertain to the term *roles* as a suitable definition of the main guidelines determining ethical interaction. The specifically Chinese, or Confucian version of virtue ethics is doubtless determined by its strong focus upon the quality of each relation, which manifest themselves in particular codes of conduct. Hence, the term “*roles*” is certainly applicable in this regard.

These roles are not based upon a concept of equality, and for the most part, they are hierarchically structured. Nevertheless, the hierarchy by which this model is defined is rooted in mutual care and responsibility. In its philosophical grounds, it is not based upon formal authority but rather upon the power of experiences. In Li's view, such a model could serve as an alternative to the absolute rule of normative and fixed laws, abstract and therefore empty principles of equal rights, or of a mechanistically constructed concept of justice (Rošker 2019, 154).

Similar to all other binary relations that form parts of his ethical system (as for instance the relation between reason and emotion, between facts and values, between social and religious morality and so on), the relation between individual and society is also based upon a model of dynamic reciprocity, which is interactive and comprises mutual influences, albeit it is not a relation of two equally dependent or equally dominant oppositions. In this relation, society is primary and more essential than the individual. The same holds true for other similarly structured binary oppositions: reason guides and orders emotion, facts precede values, and the social morality is the ultimate decisive factor in its interaction with the religious one. These models differ from dualistic designs, which are constituted by two mutually exclusive notions forming an opposition that is simultaneously a contradiction. Even though in theory, one of the oppositional notions always precludes and overrules the other, they are always interdependent in practical reality. In such a design, oppositional notions are continuously interacting with one another, thereby creating a reciprocal tension that is necessary for a dynamic development of the entire model. This tension can be balanced out by the harmonious functioning of

du as a central criterion of all decisions regarding the concrete valuation of a discrete human condition. It can delineate shares and positions of any concept within any binary oppositional notions appearing in particular situations that are always embedded in a concrete time and space, and characterized by particular forms of emotional responsiveness and rational concerns.

Such a model reminds us of certain approaches followed by Western structuralism⁴ in which one of two opposites typically assumes a role of dominance over the other. In Li's system, there is nevertheless always a simultaneous, constant emphasis upon the importance of their continuous mutual influence and interdependence. This complex, hierarchically structured inter-relativity is also one of the main reasons for the unceasing necessity of "grasping the *du*" and choosing the natural order of balance, which always tends toward universality. This tendency belongs to the essential features of *du*, and the balanced order toward which it is directed, is precisely the basic network from which this measure continuously originates and which it simultaneously creates.

Through the lens of *du*, we can also better understand many significant facets of human subjectality in Li's system. As we have seen, subjectality is a characteristic feature of both, humankind as an entirety, and the individual selves. It is an inherent element of each particular human being, but also an internal design of social groups, collectivities, communities, nations and states. It is an integral factor that constitutes humanness, or, in other words, it belongs to the crucial features of that which makes us human. Although it functions in accordance with the dynamically structured division between the subject and the object of cognition, it is not only an epistemological notion, but even more an ontological one, for it determines the basic mode of our human existence. Subjectality is that which enables us to actively create, maintain, reproduce, and develop the means and conditions of our very existence. Western theory still lacks a specific term for defining this notion, for it denotes both the epistemological and ontological dimensions of the human subject with the same expression "subjectivity." Li Zehou's "subjectality," on the other hand, is rooted in a modern Chinese neologism (*zhutixing* 主體性), which came into existence as a result of the Chinese adoption of all connotations implied in the Western

4 A similar notion of the binary opposition, which is rooted in traditional Chinese methodology, can already be found in Ferdinand de Saussure's theory. According to him, the binary opposition is an elementary predisposition, which allows for and determines values and meanings (Saussure 1959, 67ff). In such a view, each unit of language is being shaped through a reciprocal and dynamic relation to another unit (ibid., 75). Such a view can be exemplified by Laozi's claim that the not-goodness is the reason why people comprehend goodness (皆知善之為善，斯不善已, Laozi s.d., *Daode jing*: 2).

notion of the human subject.⁵ Hence, it can be viewed as a concept that unites the Enlightenment ideas of human autonomy with the pragmatic, traditional Chinese (and original Marxist) understanding of human embeddedness into the dynamically evolving material conditions of life. In this sense, it also represents a major factor that influences human relationships and ethics. As such, subjectality is strongly connected to both human material practice and morality. It co-creates and changes the world, but it also adapts to it. All these measures are connected to the individual and the collective, conscious and unconscious decisions that can be made in a most positive and effective way precisely by grasping the dynamic proper measure of *du*.

Similar to all other elements that constitute humaneness, subjectality is continuously being shaped, accumulated, preserved and developed through the dynamic and long-lasting process of sedimentation, which is in Li's view an instrumental condition of human evolution. Through sedimentation, experiences are being transformed into transcendental forms that are more or less moldable and never truly depart from the concrete life. These forms are not static, neither are they "pure" in the sense of a complete detachment from the contents. In Li's system, the immensely important form of reason, for instance, is stable and unchangeable in its basic quality of representing a formation. And yet, it is inherently connected to particular contents of will and ideas, which are dynamic and changeable. Hence, in real life, there can be no reason without reference to these alterable, continuously changing contents, which also includes emotionality.

As we have noted before, Kant looked down on any theoretical attempts to unify or fuse the realms of experience and the *a priori* (Kant 2001, 23–24), and branded them as being un-philosophical (*ibid.*, 6). But to Li Zehou at the other end, any abstract morality based upon a rigid division of empirical and transcendental has nothing to do with a real-life morality that forms the very root of human existence. Such schema of morality (and ethics) arises directly from the typically Chinese "one-world view," which not only unites facts and values

5 We can thus actually conclude that in this respect, Western culture has not yet found a denotation of an upgraded concept that is originally rooted in the fundamental paradigms of early modern Euro-American thought. As is often the case, foreign readers of works written in a particular linguistic tradition can detect in them many connotations of which their authors were unaware. In the case of the Chinese adoption of the concept of human subject, the Chinese distinction of the epistemological (*zhuguanxing*) and ontological (*zhutixing*) dimensions of subjectivity exposes and highlights these categories, which are certainly implied in the Western concept of human subject as such, but not yet explicitly defined as two equally important ways of understanding its inner coherence.

but also the spheres of universality and particularity, placing all these concepts into an inter-relational network of mutual reciprocity and influence.

Such a uniquely dynamic agenda underlies all segments of Li's ethics. In his moral philosophy, it refers to the vibrant amalgamation of *is* and *ought*. In his social ethics, it manifests itself in the reciprocal relation between the individual and the community or social group to which s/he belongs. In his anthropo-historical treatises, it can be found in the emphasis on the multifarious interaction between social material practice on the one side, and human cognition and emotional responsiveness on the other.

Not all elements constituting Li's ethical system are theoretically accomplished down to the last detail. He points out, for example, that further research could improve and identify additional arguments supporting his theory of the unity of facts and values, especially regarding the actual mode of such a unification (Li Zehou 2016b, 225). Yet, in its basic lines, the system is not only innovative and thus interesting, but also coherent, albeit it is somewhat difficult to understand when being approached from the perspective of the Western "two-worlds view" and the underlying paradigmatic images of static, unchangeable entities constructing and determining reality.

Epilogue: Learning to Be Human

Li Zehou's ethics is permeated with traditionally Chinese, particularly Confucian elements. One of the most crucial ones is visible in his continuous (although rarely explicit) emphasis on the importance of education. Here, at the very end of this book, we could contemplate for a moment on the implications that Li's system can offer to the vast arena of human learning.

In the summer of 2018, during the time in which this book was written, Beijing University hosted the World Congress of Philosophy, which takes place in various regions every five years. This time, the general English title of this huge international congress was *Learning to Be Human*. In his philosophy, Li also often emphasizes the importance of the same notion. In the Chinese transcription, however, the title differs from Li's concept. While the Chinese organizers have chosen the phrase *Xue yi cheng ren* 學以成人 to denote the notion, Li uses a shorter and more explicit version *Xue zuo ren* 學做人. While the former emphasizes becoming human as a purpose of learning, the latter is a simple description of the process, based upon a statement often and commonly used by the Chinese people when relating to or proposing a form of moral fulfillment and duty. Li often emphasizes that the notion plays a central role in the Chinese social and cultural education. At the same time, he lays stress upon its importance in the realms of social, as well as religious morality.

Hence, it is of no surprise that education is one of the central elements defining his system: as we can see from his *Overview Scheme of Ethics*, it is the core factor that leads from rituality to the condensation of reason. Together with the laws of historical development, which guide human evolvement from collective emotionality to the rituals, education forms a central power that leads to the shaping of the emotio-rational formation, which is a specific feature of human beings and belongs to their basic fundamentals.

In such a conceptualization, the notion of education is understood in its wider social connotations. The scheme further reveals the value of such an education in regard to the questions of human-becoming. In this view, which is basically defined by Confucian orientations and perspectives, the ontology of humanness (*ren xing*) is not limited to direct and one-dimensional activities of material practice, even though such practice is a fundamental and continuously evolving root of human existence. The originally pure material practice leads to the formation of reason and emotion and to the construction of language and logical thought. As we have seen from his theory of the

transformation of the empirical into the transcendental, these abstract and ideational entities are retroactively influencing, changing and reshaping the material practice. Without them, there would be no progress and no evolution of the humankind. Although in such a (purely fictive) case, the material practice could in theory still mark the foundations of that which makes us human, our existence would nevertheless remain caught into a never-ending circle of qualitatively identical stages of history, directed merely toward a purely physical survival. It is the ideational element that leads to advancement.

However, the interesting thing about education and its role in the forming of human beings is that even though it is commonly understood as something directly and intimately linked to reason, it is—in Li's system—included in the idea of human material practice. Human material practice has to be learned, and as we all know, learning is a crucial aim of any education. Because it is a part of the human material practice yet is simultaneously linked to reason and emotions, education allows for the shaping of ontologically fundamental psychology (*xinli cheng bent* 心理成本體). In this view, the human inwardness becomes a crucial field for investigating deepest levels of reality and existence. But since the field as such is posited in a basic materialist framework, the ultimate grounds of being are still connected to the concept of matter.

The continuously, dynamically changing root of our existence is matter. This would normally imply that matter is basically what we are but in Li's system, matter can only be thought of as something separated from idea. In any concrete reality, it can only exist in mutual amalgamation and interaction with the idea. Hence, in the framework of his anthropo-historical theory, both matter and idea are firmly embedded into this existential origin, even though on the conceptual level, matter precedes ideas and dominates them.

Along with the human will and in addition to the emotion, concepts or ideas are seen as crucial elements of reason. If we speak about education, which orients itself towards reason, but that can also be material, empirical and emotional, we cannot but acknowledge its value and its potentials. "Pragmatic reason," for instance, could not be maintained or developed without education. The latter is also crucial in the various particular (i.e., culturally and situationally conditioned) methods of shaping moral values. In Li's view, these are diverse and cannot be judged and even less universalized. And yet, Li remains aware of the specific requirements of the times and spaces in which he lives. He decidedly promotes the current necessity of preserving the values of Enlightenment, such as human will, autonomy, freedom, and human rights. Any of these values could be eliminated or exchanged in future. They are anything but eternal standards, but should nevertheless be incorporated into all presently existing social moralities.

We could add that in most cases, social education serves as one of the most faithful supporters and tools of social morality. Ergo, a positive and constructive education should preserve and promote these Enlightenment values. In Li's view, they can help us understand who we are.

However, in regard to the traps of instrumental rationality and the exaggerated emphasis on the individual that also accompany modern development, education could also provide models of different communities based upon relationalism (*guanxizhuyi*) and its specific codes of social conduct. It could teach people how to grasp the proper measure *du* in their moral decisions.

As we have seen earlier, education lies at the root of human existence. Becoming human always means learning to be human. Human-becoming, on the other hand, is a never-ending process in which people can actively mold and shape new images and conditions of reality. In this regard, education is of utmost importance, for it can help people value their humanness in spite of all difficulties encountered in (and created by) the current world. It is precisely our humanness that makes possible the realization of our free will, through which we can achieve new possibilities of active participation in the shaping of our realities by our autonomous decisions. But in order to understand the genuine grounds of such decisions, we might envisage for a moment the idea that humanness is not something self-evident because becoming human has to be earned, and, more importantly, learned.

General Scheme of Ethics

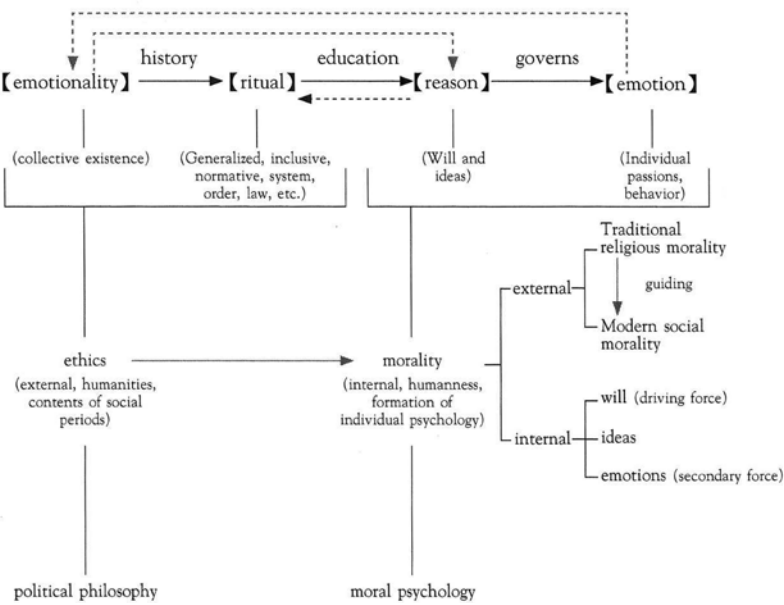


FIGURE 4 General Scheme of Ethics (*Lunlixue zong lanbiao* 倫理學總覽表)
ROŠKER 2019

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Bai ri weixin 百日維新	The Hundred Days reform	164
Bengen 本根	Root, basis, origin	112
Benti 本體	Substance, root	112, 230
Benti cunzai 本體存在	Substantive root of human existence	210
Benti jiazhi 本體價值	Ontological value	19, 112n
Biao ceng 表層	Surficial layers (of the structure of Confucianism)	218
Bie zi wei zong 別子為宗	Deviations from the orthodox Confucian teachings	242
Ceyin zhi xin 惻隱之心	Feeling of commiseration	180, 186n, 246, 261
Chao shengwu 超生物	Supra-biological	2, 9, 21, 42, 90, 125, 284n
Chaoyan 超驗	Transcendent	192–93
Chaoyue 超越	Transcendence	193
Chengxian 呈現	Appearance, presence	241
Chi fan zhexue 吃飯哲學	Philosophy of food (or eating)	10n10, 224
Chigan wenhua 恥感文化	Culture of shame	225
Chongjian 重建	Reconstruction	218, 221, 239
Chuantong wuyishi 傳統無意識	Traditional unconscious	49, 134–35
Chuantong zongjiaoxing daode 傳統宗教性道德	Traditional religious morality	74
Chunqiu fanlu 春秋繁露	<i>The Rich Dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals</i>	59, 118n27
Da wo 大我	The great self (community)	22, 77–78, 225, 228n10
Da xue 大學	<i>The Great Learning</i>	241n24
Dangdai sichao yu Zhongguo zhihui 當代思潮與中國智慧	<i>Contemporary Currents of Thought and Chinese Wisdom</i>	xii
Dao 道	The Way	38, 44, 60–61, 68, 86n, 116, 153
Dao xin 道心	The heart-mind of the Way	117n25
Daode 道德	Morality	57, 60–62, 281
Daode gan 道德感	Moral sense	185–86, 263, 284
Daode jing 道德經	<i>The Book of the Way and the Virtue</i>	61n5, 86n, 177n, 292n

Phrase	English translation	Page
Daode qinggan 道德情感	Moral emotions	70, 119, 168, 178, 227, 282
Daode xinlixue 道德心理學	Moral psychology	39, 72, 80–83, 93, 109, 119, 167–68, 203, 239, 261, 264, 281
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De 德	Virtue	31, 57, 61, 77, 79, 103, 116, 119, 130, 134, 138, 139n, 149, 179, 200, 203, 207, 211, 225, 262, 288
Du 度	(The grasping of) the dynamic “proper measure”	26, 29–33, 52, 79, 101, 134, 144–45, 152, 159, 216, 229, 234, 288, 292–93, 297
“Du” de yishu “度”的藝術	The art of (applying) the “ <i>du</i> ” (dynamic proper measure)	30, 141, 144
Duoyuan renshilun 多元認識論	Plural epistemology	120n32
Fa 法	Law	46
Fa jia 法家	Legalism	46, 218, 220–21
Fandao he shidang goujian 範導和適當構建	Guide by example and appropriately construct	45, 47
Gan 感	Emotional responsiveness	200, 283, 292, 294
Ganxing 感性	Sensibility, sensitivity	43, 108, 113, 175, 188–90, 197, 236–37, 246–47
Gaobie geming 告別革命	<i>Farewell to Revolution</i>	XII, 52
Genben 根本	Root, basis, foundation	112
Geti jidian 個體積澱	Individual sedimentation	14–15
Gewu 格物	The exploration of things	244
Gewu zhizhi 格物致知	Investigating the (external) object in order to achieve the ultimate knowledge	244
Gongju benti 工具本體	Techno-social substance, instrumental substance	21, 112, 183
Gongyang xuepai 公羊學派	Gongyang school of thought	164n32
Gongyi-shehui jiegou 工藝——社會結構	Techno-social formation (Technological—social formation)	21, 183, 196
Guannian 觀念	Ideas, concepts	173, 175

Phrase	English translation	Page
Guanxizhuyi 關係主義	Relationalism	XIV, 31, 48–49, 75, 105, 120, 126, 131–38, 142, 152–54, 162, 231, 268, 278, 290, 297
Guanxizhuyide meide lunli 關係主義的美德倫理	Relational virtue ethics	128
<i>Guanyu zhutixingde buchong shuoming</i> 關於主體性的補充說明	<i>A Supplementary Explanation of Subjectality</i>	XIn
<i>Guanyu zhutixingde di san ti-gang</i> 關於主體性的第三提綱	<i>The Third Outline on Subjectality</i>	XIn
<i>Guanyu zhutixingde di si ti-gang</i> 關於主體性的第四提綱	<i>The Fourth Outline on Subjectivity</i>	XIn
<i>Guodian Chu mu zhu jian</i> 郭店楚墓竹簡	<i>Guodian Chu bamboo slips</i>	44, 200
<i>Han Shu</i> 漢書	<i>Book of Han</i>	221n4
He 和	Harmony	XIV, 29, 31–33, 45, 52, 71, 81, 86, 101, 106, 110, 121, 133, 137–43, 145, 149, 153n, 154, 159, 200, 206, 208, 225n, 232–33, 277, 286
Heqing heli 合情合理	In accordance with both reason and emotions	139
Hexie gaoyu Zhengyi 和諧高于正義	Harmony is higher than justice	45, 51, 81, 83, 121, 140–41, 154
Hou zhexue 後哲學	Post-philosophy, post-philosophical	10
<i>Huai Nanzi</i> 淮南子	<i>Huai Nanzi</i>	59
<i>Huaxia meixue</i> 華夏美學	<i>The Chinese Aesthetic Tradition</i>	X, XIII
<i>Huiying Sangde'er ji qita</i> 回應桑德爾及其他	<i>A Response to Michael Sandel and Other Matters</i>	XII, XIV, 50
Ji qing ji xing 即情即性	Empirical sensitivity is inseparably linked to inner nature	237
Ji zhi ji xing 即知即行	One can act as soon as (or simultaneously with) one knows	181n13
Jidian 積澱	Sedimentation	IX, XIII, 9n7, 12, 14–20, 23, 26, 36, 42–43, 66, 72, 90, 103, 110, 113, 125, 183, 186, 188, 195–96, 211–12, 225, 252, 293

Phrase	English translation	Page
Jiegou 結構	Deconstruction	218
Jiezhi you du 節制有度	Properly measured ordering of systems	144
<i>Jimao wu shuo</i> 己卯五說	<i>Five Essays from 1999</i>	XI, 245
Jing—quan 經權	Principles and flexibility	143, 148, 152
Jingyan bian xianyan 經驗變先驗	The empirical is being transformed into the a-priori (or transcendental)	18, 42, 72, 125, 168, 183, 252, 258
Jinzhang guanxi 緊張關係	Tensious relation	29, 247
Jiti shehui yishi 集體社會意識	Collective social consciousness	120, 135
Ju luan shi 據亂世	(The phase of) seizing control over the chaotic times	164n32
Ju Meng qi, xing Xun xue 舉孟旗、行荀學	Raising the Mencian flag, but acting in accordance with Xunzi's teachings	238
Junzi 君子	The Confucian gentleman	203
Keguan shehuixing 客觀社會性	Objective sociality	9n9, 42, 96, 103n, 173, 193–95, 286n
Keji 克己	Self-control	93, 95, 176, 205
Kong Meng zhi dao 孔孟之道	The school (or the Way) of Confucius and Mencius	219
<i>Kongzi zai pingjia</i> 孔子再評價	<i>A Re-evaluation of Confucius</i>	XI, 87
Laodong caozuo 勞動操作	Operational labor	90, 189
Legan wenhua 樂感文化	Culture of pleasure (culture of optimism, culture of happiness)	27, 29, 32, 78, 88–89, 94, 99, 112, 115, 179, 225–26, 230, 232, 247, 271
Li 理	Structure, structural pattern, structural principle	58–59, 97–98, 123n, 235–37, 242
Li 禮	Rites, ritual, ceremonies, (Confucian) rituality	44, 46, 71, 176, 198–207, 209, 232–33
Li fa jiaorong 禮法交融	Blending of ritual and law	47
Li gong 立功	Achievement	211
<i>Li ji</i> 禮記	<i>The Book of Rites</i>	58n3, 59, 61n6, 104, 202, 204, 249
Li jiao 禮教	Ritual doctrines	207
Li sheng yu qing 禮生於情	Rituals were generated from emotionality	116n24, 139, 144, 200
Li xue 理學	School of the structural principle	235–36
Li yan 立言	Established teachings	211
Li yue 禮樂	Ritual and music	61n6, 142

Phrase	English translation	Page
Li zhuzai qing 理主宰情	Reason guides emotions	69–70, 176, 178, 200, 211, 291
Liang de lun 兩德論	Theory of the two kinds of morality	46, 67, 78, 80, 84, 153n, 166, 279, 288
Liangge shijie guan 兩個世界觀	Two-worlds view	26, 28, 83, 92, 114, 176, 178, 192, 225, 246, 262, 294
Liangzhi 良知	Inner (innate or inborn) knowledge	5, 11, 29, 37n6, 186, 188, 207, 234, 246–47
Liangzhong daode 兩種道德	Two kinds of morality	36, 45–47, 73–76, 78–79, 209, 244, 280, 288
Lijie 禮節	Rituality	116, 153
Lishi bentilun 歷史本體論	Historical ontology	XI, 9, 90n7, 222, 271, 276
<i>Lishi bentilun</i> 歷史本體論	<i>Historical ontology</i>	XI, 7
Lishi jian lixing 歷史建理性	History constructs reason	195
Lixing 理性	Reason	43–44, 57–58, 87, 95–96, 100, 104, 107, 111, 140, 161–62, 175, 179, 192, 194, 243, 262–63, 284–85
Lixing ningju 理性凝聚	Condensation or solidification of reason	4, 11, 19, 41, 70–72, 74, 96, 168, 184–85, 195, 200, 210–11, 214, 260, 295
Lixing ronghua 理性融化	Melting of reason	41, 71
<i>Lun meigan, mei he yishu</i> 論美感、美和藝術	<i>On Aesthetic Feeling, Beauty and Art</i>	VIII, 16, 255
Lunli 倫理	Ethics	55–59, 62, 281
Lunli benti 倫理本體	The substantial root of ethics	1, 65n, 112n, 167
<i>Lunli jiaoke shu</i> 倫理教科書	<i>Textbook on Ethics</i>	62n
Lunli lixing 倫理理性	Ethical reason	88
Lunli xue 倫理學	Ethics (as an academic discipline or field of study), ethical studies	55–56, 62
<i>Lunlixue gangyao</i> 倫理學綱要	<i>An Outline of Ethics</i>	XII, 34
<i>Lunlixue zong lanbiao</i> 倫理學總覽表	<i>General Scheme of Ethics</i>	111n19, 167, 173, 184, 299
Lunlizhuyi 倫理主義	Ethicism	3, 144
<i>Lunyu</i> 論語	<i>The (Confucian) Analects</i>	5, 12, 58n3, 61, 89, 93n, 104, 105–6, 114, 131, 142, 176n, 177n, 203–4, 208, 218, 220n1, 223, 229n12, 234–35, 241n24, 267n

Phrase	English translation	Page
<i>Lunyu jindu</i> 論語今讀	<i>Reading the Analects Today</i>	XI, 43, 218
<i>Man shuo 'Xiti Zhongyong'</i> 漫說 '西體中用'	<i>A Simple Lecture on 'Western Substance and Chinese Function'</i>	XII
<i>Meide licheng</i> 美的歷程	<i>The Path of Beauty</i>	X, XIII
Meixue da taolun 美學大討論	The great debate on aesthetics	VIII
Meixue re 美學熱	Aesthetic fever	VIII n2
<i>Meixue sanshu</i> 美學三書	<i>Three Books on Aesthetics</i>	X
<i>Meixue si jiang</i> 美學四講	<i>Four Lectures on Aesthetics</i>	X
Neide guanxi 內的關係	Inherent or inner relations	77
Neisheng waiwang 內聖外王	The inner sage and the external ruler	76, 78, 110, 150, 219, 243-44
Neitui 內推	Intention	45, 124
Neizai 內在	Innate, immanent	192
Neizai benti 內在本體	The inner substantial root	196
Neizai chaoyue 內在超越	Internal (or immanent) transcendence, transcendence in immanence	28-29, 178n, 193n, 226, 245-46
Neizai zirande renhua 內在自然的人化	The humanization of the internal nature	167-68, 197, 206, 214
Ningju 凝聚	Condensation, solidification	153
<i>Pipan zhexuede pipan: Kangde shuping</i> 批判哲學的批判：康德述評	<i>Critique of Critical Philosophy: A New Approach to Kant</i>	IX-X, XIII-XIV, 16, 20, 22n21, 40, 42, 173, 250
Pubian biranxing 普遍必然性	Universal necessity	9, 21, 36, 40-42, 96, 103n, 173, 189, 193-95, 286
Qi 氣	Vital or creative potential, vital force	5, 58n4, 122, 123n, 180, 204, 232
Qing 情	Emotion, situation	13, 23, 33, 37-38, 68-69, 71, 79, 81, 87, 95, 97, 110, 111n18, 112
Qing benti 情本體 (or qinggan benti 情感本體)	Emotion-based substance	12, 43, 69n15, 75, 81, 83, 86, 100, 110-21, 123-26, 136, 139, 152-53, 166, 214, 225, 230, 260-61, 272, 278, 283, 289-90
Qing bentide neitui 情本體的內推	Intention of emotion-based substance	45, 124
Qing bentide waitui 情本體的外推	Extension of the emotion-based substance	45, 124
Qingjing 情境	Situation or context	68, 111n18
Qingkuang 情況	Situations, circumstances	68

Phrase	English translation	Page
Qingli jiegou 情理結構	Emotio-rational structure	5, 12, 24, 26, 31, 41, 43-44, 67, 70-71, 78-79, 82, 86, 95, 97, 99-103, 105-10, 119n30, 120n31, 126, 133-35, 137, 140, 144, 152, 154, 159, 184, 195, 200, 224-27, 230, 260, 272, 281
Ren 仁	(Co)humaneness, Chinese humanism	5, 17, 24-25, 43, 46, 75, 80n23, 93-95, 108, 117n25, 118, 121-26, 130, 176n, 180n, 181n12, 198, 204-5, 209, 224-27, 229-30, 234-35, 237, 242, 246-47, 282-83, 293
Ren benti 仁本體	Humaneness-based substance, humaneness as substance, humaneness as the substantial root	121-22, 125, 283
Ren huozhe 人活著	The human being is alive	271
Ren qing 人情	Human feelings	35, 47, 67, 88n4, 107, 116
Ren suoyi wei ren zhi suo zai 人所以為人之所在	That, which makes human be- ings human	167
Ren xing 人性	Humanness, human nature, human inborn qualities, inborn humanness	IX, 1, 8-10, 18-19, 21, 23-24, 28, 41-44, 61, 70, 73, 83, 96, 103n, 108-9, 111, 136, 167, 176-77, 183, 186n, 196, 198, 202, 214-15, 234, 248, 254-55, 260, 262, 265, 272, 274, 282, 285, 287, 289, 292, 295, 297
Ren yi 人意	Human intention or will	36, 43, 208, 282, 289, 296
Ren zhi 人治	Rule of one man	47, 107
Rendaozhuyi 人道主義	Humanism	25, 43-44, 57-58, 89, 94, 118, 181n12, 228-29, 248, 255, 282
Rende benti 人的本體	The substantial root of human beings	1, 167, 289
Rende jiegou 仁的結構	The structure of humaneness	181
Rende ziranhua 人的自然化	Naturalization of humans	8, 14n, 252
Renhuade ziran 人化的自然	Humanized nature	IX, 14n, 167
Renlei qi yuan tigang 人類起源提綱	<i>An Outline of the Origin of Mankind</i>	XI

Phrase	English translation	Page
Renlei zongtide shengcun yanxu 人類總體的生存延續	Sustainable preservation of the existence of humankind as a whole	177, 283
Renleixue bentilun 人類學本體論	Anthropological ontology	7n3, 90, 184n16
Renleixue lishi bentilun 人類學歷史本體論	Anthropological historical ontology, anthropo-historical ontology	6–8, 10n11, 12–13, 14, 21, 26, 81, 83, 90, 99, 112, 123, 152, 247, 258, 268, 270
<i>Renleixue lishi bentilun</i> 人類學歷史本體論	<i>Anthropo-historical Ontology</i>	XI, 7n4, 34, 177, 231
Renxing nengli 人性能力	Capacity of humanness	19–20, 35, 175, 181, 198, 210–15
<i>Renxue bentilun</i> 仁學本體論	<i>The Ontology of Discourses on Humaneness</i>	121
Renzhi lixing 認知理性	Cognitive reason	88
Ru jiao 儒教	Confucian religion, Confucian doctrines	222
Ru xue 儒學	Confucianism, the teachings of the scholars	XI, 5, 26, 28, 37n6, 38, 46–47, 77, 79, 86, 87n3, 89–91, 93–94, 97–100, 104–5, 108, 116, 118, 122, 129, 131–32, 143–44, 145n17, 153n, 166, 200, 203, 209, 217–24, 226, 229–32, 235, 239, 241, 243–45, 249, 267n
Rudao hubu 儒道互補	Complementary empowerment of Confucianism and Daoism	86n, 218
Rufa huyong 儒法互用	Reciprocal utilization of Confucianism and Legalism	47, 83, 125, 218, 220, 228
San ju jiao 三句教	Three teachings	195, 197
San shi shuo 三世說	Three phases theory	164
Shehuixing daode 社會性道德	Social morality	4, 31, 38, 45, 73–76, 78, 86n, 103n, 138, 163, 208, 214–16, 288, 291, 297
Shehuixing gongde 社會性公德	Social public virtues	47, 73
Shen ceng 深層	Deep layers (of the structure of Confucianism)	218
Shenceng jiegou 深層結構	Deep (mental) structure	99
Sheng ping shi 昇平世	(The phase of) establishing the period of peace and prosperity	164n32
<i>Shenme shi daode</i> 什麼是道德	<i>What Is Morality</i>	XII
Shidang 適當	Appropriate, appropriateness	216
Shifeizhi xin 是非之心	Distinguishing heart-mind	102

Phrase	English translation	Page
Shijian lixing 實踐理性	Practical reason	12, 40-41, 64, 87, 101, 169, 172-73, 182, 184-85, 210, 236, 254, 258, 260, 286
Shiyong lixing 實用理性	Pragmatic reason, pragmatic rationality	12, 27, 29, 41, 78, 86-92, 94-99, 100-103, 106, 118, 125, 140, 145n16, 162, 177, 185, 224, 226, 228-30, 234, 236, 270, 289-90, 296
<i>Shiyong lixing yu legan wenhua</i> 實用理性與樂感文化	<i>Pragmatic Reason and a Culture of Pleasure</i>	XI, 89, 112, 117n26
<i>Shuo Xiti Zhongyong</i> 說西體中用	<i>On Western Substance and Chinese Application</i>	XII
<i>Shuowen jiezi</i> 說文解字	<i>Interpreting Texts and Explaining Characters</i> (The oldest Chinese etymological dictionary from the Han dynasty)	60, 118, 177n
<i>Song Ming lixue zhuiqiu chaoyande shibai</i> 宋明理學追求超驗的失敗	<i>The Failure of the Song and Ming Neo-Confucian Quest for Transcendentalism</i>	117
Tai ping shi 太平世	(The phase of) world peace	164n32
Tai shang li de 太上立德	Establishing virtue at the highest level	103-4, 179, 211
Tian 天	Heaven, nature	26, 38, 80-81, 208, 237
Tian dao 天道	Way of Heaven	11, 91, 95-96, 118n28, 208-9, 229, 270
Tian li 天理	Cosmic structure, pattern (principle) of Heaven	37n6, 185, 186n, 207, 234, 236, 238n19
Tian ming 天命	Decree of Heaven	91, 229, 236
Tian xin wei ren 天心為仁	Humaneness as the heart-mind of Heaven (Nature, cosmos)	118
Tian yi 天意	Heavenly intention or will	208
Tianfu 天賦	Inborn	192
Tianzhi jing, dizhi yi 天之經, 地之義	Rule of the heaven, duty of humans	207
Tiyong bu er 體用不二	Substance and function cannot be separated	247
Wai wang 外王	The external ruler	73n, 76, 219-20, 239, 243-44
Waide guanxi 外的關係	External relations	77n
Waitui 外推	Extension	45, 124
Wenhua jidian 文化積澱	Cultural sedimentation	14, 109, 112, 118, 168

Phrase	English translation	Page
Wenhua-xinli jieoug 文化—心理結構	Cultural-psychological formation	1, 9n7, 14n, 21–22, 43, 65n, 90–91, 99–100, 109, 117, 159, 167, 178, 183–84, 188, 196, 199, 210, 218–19, 222, 252
Wode zhexue tigang 我的哲學提綱	<i>An Outline of my Philosophy</i>	x, xin, 7n4
Wu 無	Absence (non-existence, non-being)	114–15, 272
Wu lun 五倫	Five (basic) relationships	129–30
Wu xing shuo 五行說	Five phases theory	221
Wushi chuantong 巫史傳統	Shamanistic historical tradition	200, 219
Wuxu bianfa 戊戌變法	The Wuxu reform movement	164n31
Wuzhong jidian 物種積澱	Sedimentation of species	14–15, 109, 168
Xian yu jingyan 先於經驗	Prior to experience	42, 188, 191, 252
Xiandai shehuixing daode 現代社會性道德	Modern social morality	35–36, 50, 67, 73–75, 77, 79, 82, 137–38, 140–41, 151, 154, 155, 159, 161–62, 168, 213–14, 216, 244, 254, 279, 287–88
Xiantian 先天	A priori	191–92
Xianyan 先驗	Transcendental	191–92
Xiao 孝, xiao ti 孝悌	Family reverence, filial respect and love, filial piety	130, 186n, 187, 188n, 207, 209, 235
Xiao jing 孝經	<i>Classic of Family Reverence</i> , <i>Classic of Filial Piety</i>	12, 132, 187n, 207
Xiao wo 小我	The small self (individual)	22, 228
Xin 信	Trust	129, 131, 174n5, 177
Xin 心	Heart-mind	28, 116, 180–81, 186n, 206, 234–35, 237, 242–44
Xin bu li shen 心不離身	No divisions between body and mind	237
Xin ganxing 新感性	New sensitivity	197
Xin rujia 新儒家	Modern or New Confucians	28, 76n, 78, 117, 204, 220, 222, 226n, 238n19, 238n20, 240, 244, 246
Xin ruxue 新儒學	Modern Confucianism (New Confucianism)	77, 117, 218–19, 222, 226, 238–39, 247
Xin shu 新書	<i>New Writings</i>	59, 61
Xin xue 心學	School of the heart-mind	122n34, 236
Xingti 性體	Innate moral substance	242, 246
Xinli benti 心理本體	Psychological substance	18, 21, 33, 112, 183, 196–97, 271
Xinli cheng benti 心理成本體	Psychology grows into substance	152, 195–97, 271, 296
Xinli yuanze 心理原則	Psychological principles	43–44, 89, 118, 181n12

Phrase	English translation	Page
Xinti 心體	Substance of heart-mind	242, 246
Xinxing 心性	Heart-mind and humaneness, heart-mind and inner nature	234, 236, 241, 246
Xiti Zhongyong 西體中用	Western substance, Chinese application (or function)	231, 240, 259
Xiu shen 修身	Cultivation of the Self	62, 168, 180, 198, 211, 228, 233, 244
Xuanyuan jichu 血緣基礎	The basis of kinship relations	181n12
Xue yi cheng ren 學以成人	Learning to be human	295
Xue zuo ren 學做人	Learning to be human	3, 295
Ya yue 雅樂	Elegant music (a form of classical Chinese music, Confucian “proper” music)	233
Yao Kangde, bu yao Heigeer 要康德, 不要黑格爾	Kant yes, Hegel no (a slogan)	63
Yi de zhi guo 以德治國	Ruling by virtue	76
Yige shijie guan 一個世界觀	One-world view	26–29, 80, 89, 99, 107, 131, 176, 178, 182, 192–93, 225–26, 228, 234, 235, 237, 241, 245–47, 285, 293
Yizhi 意志	Will	23, 37, 39, 43, 57, 70, 103, 111n19, 169–70, 172–78, 180–81, 287, 293
You 有	Presence (being, existence)	114–15, 272
You qing yuzhou guan 有情宇宙觀	Emotion-based worldview, emotional cosmology	177–78, 200
You wu dao li, shi li gui ren 由巫到禮, 釋禮歸仁	<i>From Shamanism to Ritual Regulations and Humaneness</i>	XII–XIII, 76
Youtongxing 有用性	Usefulness	88n4, 90, 270
Yue yu zheng tong 樂與政通	Music is integrated into the governance	45
Za zhu ji 雜著集	<i>A Collection of Various Essays</i>	x
Zhengzhi, lunli, zongjiao san he yi 政治、倫理、宗教三合一	Trinity of politics, ethics, and religion	47, 77, 107
Zhexue gangyao 哲學綱要	<i>Outline of a Philosophy</i>	x, XIII, 34
Zhexue yanjiu 哲學研究	<i>Philosophy research</i>	VIII
Zhi 志	Will	5
Zhi shan 至善	Ultimate good	176–77, 262–63
Zhong 忠	Loyalty	77, 116, 135, 174n5, 209
Zhong yong 中庸	The Middle Way, the State of Equilibrium or the Mean (also the book <i>The Doctrine of the Mean</i>)	29, 242n

Phrase	English translation	Page
Zhongguo bianzheng fa 中國辯證法	Chinese dialectics	152
<i>Zhongguo gudai sixiang shilun</i> 中國古代思想史論	<i>On Traditional Chinese Intellectual History</i>	XI, XIII–XIV, 88, 97
<i>Zhongguo jindai sixiang shilun</i> 中國近代思想史論	<i>On Premodern Chinese Intellectual History</i>	XI
<i>Zhongguo lunlixue shi</i> 中國論理學史	<i>The History of Chinese Ethics</i>	62n
Zhongguo shehui kexue yuan zhexue yanjiu suo 中國社會科學院哲學研究所	Research institute of philosophy at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS)	VIII
<i>Zhongguo xiandai sixiang shilun</i> 中國現代思想史論	<i>On Modern Chinese Intellectual History</i>	XI
Zhongti Xiyong 中體西用	(Preserving) Chinese essence and (applying) Western functions	231, 240, 259
Zhongxue wei ti, Xixue wei yong 中學為體，西學為用	Chinese learning for substance (fundamental principles) and Western learning for function (practical application)	XII
Zhou Kong zhi dao 周孔之道	The School (or the Way) of Duke Zhou and Confucius	219
Zhuanhuaxinde chuangzaozhe 轉化性的創造者	Transformative creator	199
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Zirande renhua 自然的人化	Humanization of nature	1, 5, 7–9, 14, 109, 167, 206, 252
Ziwo kanxian 自我坎陷	The self-negation of the (moral) self	243

Phrase	English translation	Page
Ziyou yizhi 自由意志	Free will	1-2, 4, 11-13, 19, 22-24, 36, 40, 65n, 67, 69-72, 74, 81-83, 92n9, 96, 103-4, 109, 167-68, 169, 171-74, 176, 179-81, 186, 198, 208, 214, 233n, 241, 254, 297
Zongjiaoxing daode 宗教性道德	Religious morality	4, 11, 38, 45, 73, 75-76, 78, 84, 99, 138, 148n22, 166, 207-9, 216, 288, 291, 295
Zongjiaoxing side 宗教性私德	Religious private virtues, private religious morality	47-48, 73, 214, 244
Zou wo zijide lu 走我自己的路	<i>Following my own way</i>	x
Zui hou shizai 最後實在	Ultimate reality	112-13, 115, 230
Zuigan wenhua 罪感文化	Culture of sin	225